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SWORD AND STIRRUP



SWORD AND STIRRUP

MEMORIES OF
AN ADVENTUROUS LIFE

BY
HERVEY DE MONTMORENCY

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CHAPTER I

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

When to the sessions of sweet, silent thought,
I summon up remembrance of things past. . . .

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

IN 1814, as the Allies marched into the French capital after Napoleon's first abdication, the most sinister rumours preceded the Cossacks, who were credited with perpetrating hideous atrocities; 'reliable witnesses' could even be found who declared them to be ogres who ate babies. All the little children in Paris were accordingly hidden in cupboards or underneath beds; while the bigger ones were besought by parents and nurses to remain indoors. When, however, these dreaded Tartars actually rode down the Champs-Élysées, a thin, red-headed boy, thirteen years of age, was observed perched on the pommel of the Hetman's saddle, grinning from ear to ear and as proud as Lucifer! This little boy was my grandfather, Hervey Francis de Montmorency. It always seems to me that in some subtle fashion he must have imbibed the ferocious character of the grim Cossack who, with such unexpected good nature, had hoisted the little Irish lad on to his horse's withers, because my grandfather himself grew to be the very grimmest of grim old men of whom everyone was terrified, and whose judgments were always Draconic.

My great-grandfather, Raymond Hervey de Montmorency, who at the close of his life was a lieut.-colonel of the Duke of York's Hussars, was a prisoner of war at the time, on parole in the French capital; he had been M.P. for Dingle in the old Irish Parliament before the Union, in succession to his uncle – raised to the Peerage as Lord Frankfort – and

was a major of Cavalry in the Peninsular War: first in the 13th, then in the 9th Regiment of Light Dragoons. During April 1811, a few hours after having been relieved at the end of a long spell of outpost duty on the banks of the Guadiana, and owing to the slackness of mounted pickets which should have covered him, my great-grandfather, with a squadron of the 13th, was surprised in bivouac, captured by a French Cavalry patrol, and carried, a prisoner of war, to Verdun, from which place he was transferred to Saint-Germain; there he was not only released on parole, but given permission by Napoleon to bring his family from Ireland to live with him at Saint-Germain or Paris. Thus it came about that my grandfather as a boy often saw the Emperor riding through his capital, and always used to describe him as a fat little man, and a mightily bad horseman, seated on a white charger.

My grandfather served in the 3rd Madras Cavalry, and took part in the First Burmese War, on the staff of Sir Archibald Campbell; he was present at the attack on Donabew, where the English troops were repulsed, and, on retiring, abandoned their wounded to the enemy, by whom they were tortured – some being crucified; the corpses of the poor fellows were seen floating down the river. Sir Archibald Campbell, however, exacted revenge, and eventually succeeded in capturing Donabew and re-establishing the free navigation of the Irrawady. After an armistice had been proclaimed, my grandfather was sent on a mission to the King of Ava, who presented him with an emerald, which I now possess. He sold out at an early age, married Dora FitzGerald of Carrygoran, Co. Clare, and settled in France, from which country he never stirred, dying at the age of eighty-two years. Indeed, my grandfather became to all intents and purposes a Frenchman: he loved France, and was proud of his French descent, absolutely detesting Ireland and the Irish. I never remember seeing him open an English newspaper or book:

he read and spoke French always, unless he had occasion to address an Englishman.

My father, who was a colonel in the Royal Engineers, was as calm, reserved, and lovable as my grandfather was fierce, impetuous, and terrifying; just as everyone feared my grandfather; so all living creatures – animals as well as men – loved my father; but alas! he was so often stationed abroad that I seldom lived with him, and my childhood was spent chiefly with my grandparents, who divided their time between Paris and Biarritz which, in those far-distant days, was an almost unknown fishing village near Bayonne – indeed, letters used to be addressed to us at Biarritz *près de Bayonne*. My grandfather built what must have been almost the first villa in Biarritz: it stands on a promontory, and can be observed to-day as one of the principal landmarks on the lofty cliffs, exposed to all the Atlantic gales. I remember, as a tiny child, in our garden, leaning my little body back against the tremendous force of the wild west wind, and my delight at the extremely acute angle at which I could lie down against it.

One day, Sir Richard Burton, the great traveller, came to dine. My grandfather had known him in India. I took an intense fancy to him, being fascinated by his tanned, deeply lined face, and he was kind and attentive to me, child as I was. Two things I can recall: he said, during a meal, that he was himself of gipsy blood, and that the best religion for mankind in the mass was Islam.

As a child, I remember being told that my great-grandfather, who fought under Wellington, was by no means such an admirer of the military genius of the Great Napoleon as are English officers nowadays, the folly of his insistence upon the attack in column being manifest in all the battles in the Peninsular War, where the French columns were shot down by the English Line like sheep, before they could deploy. At Waterloo, also, the French attacking Infantry divisions were crowded into such a ridiculously narrow space

that they embarrassed one another's movements and their own Cavalry rode on top of them – they were in a similar predicament to that of the Romans at Cannæ, having insufficient room in which to manœuvre. Whereas at Austerlitz, Napoleon occupied a front of some ten kilometres, at Waterloo, with the same number of troops, he only covered four kilometres.

My grandfather, too, detested Napoleon, whom he used to describe, in his blunt language, as the biggest liar and cad in history, who should have been hanged for murder or shot for desertion !

It must be remembered that my grandparents were born in the after-glow of the eighteenth century, inheriting its traditions and prejudices. Up to the very end of her life – and she lived to be ninety-eight years of age – my grandmother, whenever she went on a journey, always travelled *incognita*: the *grande dame*, who had been too proud to proclaim her identity to postilions, would have flinched from revealing it to railway porters. The shadow of revolution – both in France and Ireland – was upon the old people; they had known and mixed with those who had participated in its horrors; they were still stunned by the reverberation of its thunders and perplexed by its consequences. Being brought up by my grandparents, my character was affected by their opinions: not necessarily in the same way – often, indeed, through reaction, in a contrary direction; instead of evolving, it may have developed by involution.

My grandfather was so fierce and strong that he inspired everyone with fear. I remember once he became so impatient with me, while I was having a swimming lesson, that he picked me up and flung me head over heels into deep water; this made me very nervous of sea-bathing for a long time. He had a soft spot in his heart, nevertheless, and was devoted to animals, especially to his small Italian greyhound, *Mignonne*; they formed a strange couple, the two, always inseparable: she, so graceful and dainty, for ever dancing;

he, with his grim looks and heavy tread ! It is through him, nevertheless, that I learned to love France which he taught me to regard as home: I feel an exile, and my heart sinks within me, when, from the deck of a channel steamer, I watch the Napoleon column and the dome of Boulogne cathedral disappearing out of sight in the mist.

When I was eight years old, my grandmother, who was as severe as my grandfather, ordered Sylvain, the Basque coachman, to whip me. He came into my bedroom with a riding-cane in his hand ; he was a tall, powerful man, with whiskers cropped short and as stiff as horsehair. As he strode towards me, he kept muttering, '*Allons, allons,*' to keep up his courage. I was a tiny child, very frightened, and I cried out, '*Sylvain, Sylvain, pour l'amour de Dieu, ne me fais pas de mal !*'

The next thing I can remember was the cane flying across the room and Sylvain sobbing and crushing me to his heart, rubbing his wire-like whiskers against my cheek and murmuring, '*Ne dis rien à ta gran'mère, mon petit, ne dis rien !*' Can it be wondered that, through Sylvain, I love all the Basques ?

In my youth I was exceedingly delicate, and, owing to the tendency of our family to consumption, it was not deemed advisable for me to remain in England during the damp, foggy winters ; besides, my father was often stationed abroad, so I only saw my parents at fitful intervals throughout my childhood. I was, perhaps, akin to Virgil's unhappy, neglected child (*cui non risere parentes*) and sought affection wherever I might find it. I was bitterly disappointed, on my first visit to England, at the dull, dreary climate, at the loss of my beloved *pouffe*, or balloon-like eider-down bed-cover ; but what I missed most of all was my beautiful Basque nursery-maid.

Although I cannot tell whether it were at Colchester, or in London, I well recollect the policemen wearing top-hats, because my nurse, playing that well-worn ruse which nurses have practised through all the ages, used to lead me

up to the policeman when I was naughty, and one dreadful day, to my horror, the policeman, whom I was learning to regard as a friend, appeared strangely unrecognisable and awe-inspiring in his new helmet !

My father once, in 1878, took me to see the first electric light at Charing Cross : it was an arc-lamp on a lofty standard ; I remember it glowed fiercely with a faintly bluish light, and was dimmed at intervals somewhat jerkily. This electric light inspired Arthur Roberts, at the Canterbury music-hall, to sing one of his most successful comic songs : dressed up as the policeman, he got caught out with the cook, owing to the penetrative quality of the illumination. At Christmas that year I was taken to see Zazel fired out of a cannon at the Westminster Aquarium : she was such a pretty, graceful girl that I fell in love with her on sight, and pestered my parents to take me to see her again : she drove poor Nellie Power, the Dick Whittington of the previous year, completely out of my ten-year-old heart. At the Lyceum Theatre, in the very centre of the front row of the dress-circle, seated between my mother and father, I saw Henry Irving play Hamlet. I remember being thrilled by the ghost ! I have seen many Hamlets since those days : Wilson Barrett, Sarah Bernhardt, H. B. Irving, Forbes Robertson, and Gielgud – the last two incomparably superior – but none has ever spoken the lines : ‘The cat will mew and dog will have his day !’ so well as Irving ; at least none has ever left such a lasting impression – I can hear his words to-day, ringing in my ears, as I think of him.

It was not possible for me to go to school, except for brief and broken periods, as I was constantly falling ill, so I acquired such little instruction as I possessed from tutors or daily classes, and, as the fogs of London made me cough, to my delight, I returned to France, and for the next six years was continually absent from England.

After the death of my grandfather, who followed my father to the grave when I was fifteen years of age, I promised to

study hard and attempt to pass into the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich; but my family began to grow apprehensive that I might not be properly equipped for the ordeal. It was realised that I was quick and intelligent, but, owing to the discursive, desultory nature of the education I had undergone, it was feared that I might be a dunce.

As the climate of Boulogne agreed with me, it was decided that I should return there and board with a tutor who took backward youths from public schools to prepare them for the Army. With a view to letting me into the secret of the spirit of cricket in English public school life, I was made by my comrades to play a game which bored me to tears, and often left me with bruised fingers and sore shins.

I grew to love Boulogne, nevertheless, and was never weary of roaming around the old ramparts, or loitering on the quays to watch the brown-sailed luggers discharging their cargoes of glittering fish; and I learned to admire the hardy fisher-folk: the brave, strong men, and the deep-bosomed, graceful women with the stiff lace caps which framed their pretty faces. How often, while in some inhospitable country, have I longed to listen to their street-cries again, as I used to hearken to them as a child in the early mornings, and the click-clock of their wooden-soled shoes on the cobble-stones! They formed an exclusive colony aloof from the rest of society, these fisher-folk of Boulogne, who dwelt upon the ramps in the *Quartier de Saint-Pierre*, having their own strict code of honour and behaviour. Woe unto him who transgressed their unwritten laws! He might suffer condign, summary punishment at the hands of the vengeful *poissonnières*: armed with the *mules* which they had slipped off their feet, the infuriated women would surround their victim and thrash him; ugly weapons, these wooden heels, in the muscular hands of indignant fishwives!

In the 'seventies Boulogne was a favourite place for schools for both girls and boys, and I can remember the 'crocodiles'

of flappers being ogled by old Lord Dunsandle as they wound their way through the crooked streets of the old town; he looked as if he had stepped out of Thackeray's pages, with his hat well cocked on one side and his eyeglass in his eye. There were some beauties, too, in those 'crocodiles': Sybil Grey, who became the fair Lady Eden and was painted by Whistler; but the sweetest of all was Rita Milne. How proud I felt when she condescended to be my partner at the local Turveydrop's establishment, where we all learned dancing! And how I longed to kiss her – only I was too shy!

Every August and November, too, the fair would awaken a flutter in our childish bosoms, with its merry-go-rounds, grinding out Offenbach's airs, and its flaming, stinking kerosene lanterns! The best fried potatoes in the world could be bought there, in yellow, grease-proof paper skilfully twisted into *cocottes* by the white-capped, be-aproned cook, who poised and tilted his frying-pan, sizzling and spluttering over a charcoal stove, which glowed red in the dark winter evenings, and gave out a rich, warm smell of melted lard. There were stalls where gingerbread and Turkish delight were sold by a stout, vociferous son of Gaul disguised as an Oriental: couldn't he just make his R's roll and his M's reverberate as, with stentorian voice, he boomed forth: '*Voilà le Rahat Lakoum!*' More fun might be discovered in the booths whose garish posters grossly exaggerated some tamer spectacle within: fat women, giants, dwarfs, monsters, wrestlers, or wax images of Inquisition torturers with their racks, their thumb-screws and their 'iron maiden.'

Many trippers from England used to frequent the fair, although in those days it took fully two hours and a half to reach Boulogne from Folkestone in the old paddle-wheel steamers. I can remember once, on the *Napoleon the Third*, a sail was hoisted to steady the ship.

Towards the end of February 1884, hearing that a masked ball was to be given in the theatre at the *mi-carême*, some

of us youths became all agog to attend it, and began forthwith to think out ways and means of being present. We made the discovery that the same key fitted two doors: one leading into the playground at the back of the house, the other opening into the street. We also observed that the janitor, after having first of all locked up the front exit, used to close the entrance to the playground afterwards, leaving the key in the keyhole of the latter. It became no difficult matter, therefore, for us to slip out at night after the whole household had retired to rest. While our tutor fondly imagined that we were sleeping the innocent sleep of so many cherubim, more like night-owls – having stuffed our beds to give them the appearance of being occupied – we were stealing on tiptoe downstairs, keen and ready for fun and wickedness! One night, by way of a trial gallop, we ventured out and visited the *cafés chantants* on the quays, and, as our escapade escaped detection, we were emboldened to repeat the adventure in the midst of Lent. I enjoyed myself immensely that evening, dancing with two or three bright-eyed fisher-wenchers for whose beauty Boulogne is famous!

I have never been able to make up my mind whether the disaster which ensued were a misadventure, or whether, our nocturnal jaunts being suspected, an ambush had been deliberately laid for us. It had been pre-arranged that we should assemble outside the tutor's house at one o'clock in the morning; at that hour, accordingly, we all reached the rendezvous, but what was our horror and despair to find that, during our absence at the *bal masqué*, the door had been relocked and we were barred out!

When the first shock of our consternation had passed, we held a council of war in the shadow of a church. The council effected nothing – as is the way with such conventions – but it revealed the presence of at least three abject poltroons in our company. After half an hour's discussion, I ventured out into the moonlight to reconnoitre the

approaches to the school, and, to my intense joy, descried one of the class-room's blinds flapping in the breeze. This meant that the window was open, and I returned with the welcome news to the group of shivering, despairing delinquents. There were six of us in the party, so, two by two, we approached the window, and, by climbing upon one another's shoulders, succeeded in effecting our entrance. As I was the smallest and lightest, it was agreed that I should be left to the last in order that I might be hauled up by the youth who had used me as a ladder. All went well until, wriggling upon the window-sill, I had almost regained the room, when the sound of a heavy footfall, and the appearance of a streak of light through a chink in the door, proclaimed the rapid approach of our tutor.

My companions in crime darted up a flight of stairs leading to the bedrooms, while I was left half in, half out, barely in equilibrium, on the window-ledge, escape being out of the question! I was caught red-handed and, although, while the footsteps of the master were echoing along the passage, I was frozen with fear, when he actually seized the seat of my trousers with his powerful hand, and lifted me into the room, the situation struck me as being so ludicrous that I burst out laughing. My capture effected, I was immediately cross-examined as to the identity of my companions, but I naturally remained silent.

On the following day the whole class was assembled in the big room, and I was made to stand before them. The tutor announced that he was going to expel me, and would, furthermore, refuse me the necessary certificate of character for entrance into Woolwich, unless the guilty companions of my escapade surrendered their names. Silence reigned for a quarter of an hour while my boxes, already packed by the matron, were being ostentatiously carried by the porter through the class-room, out of doors, and hoisted upon a cab waiting at the entrance. Not a soul uttered a word, so

I was driven to the harbour and conducted on board the Folkestone boat.

I cannot help thinking that my tutor had a certain latent respect for my inflexibility, because a few months later he wrote to my mother enclosing a certificate of character which enabled me to present myself as a candidate for Woolwich.

I have often thought that the fear and pain of a public execution must be deadened by the excitement and all the pomp and circumstance surrounding it. On such occasions man is upheld by his overweening vanity, by his pride at being the centre figure of the display ! And so it was undoubtedly in my case throughout that ceremony of being expelled; but, during the cross-channel passage and railway journey to London, I had plenty of time to cool my heels. My mother, smarting under the humiliation of my freshly earned stigma, was a terrifying customer to face, and my courage began to ooze rapidly away in anticipation of her wrath the nearer I approached my home.

At Charing Cross I was met by a dear old brother officer of my father's: a kind-hearted Irishman of the best type, who always had ready to hand a fund of dry humour; while making light of my escapade, he warned me, nethertheless: 'You are in disgrace, my boy, and you must try and live it down; you will have a precious hard time for the next few weeks; but in this life you must learn to take your medicine like a man !'

I have often pondered these words in my heart, and have always tried to follow this most excellent advice. On this melancholy occasion, I set to work to steel my heart for the dreaded interview with my mother. Colonel Marsh was right, for the next month I passed through Hell. My mother, after the first reproaches in which she spoke words which stung me to the soul, refused to say a word to me or to allow me into her presence; my sister was not permitted to see me or approach me, the servants were forbidden to wait on me.

I was treated as the guilty wife is treated in Anatole France's *Le Mannequin d'osier*. I was shunned, boycotted and sent to Coventry ! Could any treatment have been more galling ? I can remember going for endless tramps through the Surrey woods, till, footsore and exhausted, I flung myself upon the mossy banks and sobbed my heart out ! One day, when brooding over my grief and nursing a hatred for the whole human race, I espied a rabbit which, dwelling in the midst of his scamper, peeped at me in a friendly, wistful fashion from behind a furze-bush, and I heard the wise thrush sing his spring song of welcome; and then I knew that every living thing can forgive save man.

After some weeks of this penance, an old friend of my father's approached my mother and persuaded her that something ought to be done for my future; long discussions followed, as the outcome of which I was sent to Wolffram's, at Blackheath, one of the most famous of the Army crammers.

CHAPTER II

THE 'SHOP' IN THE 'EIGHTIES

Then the soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard. . . .
As You Like It, Act II., scene vii.

IT is difficult to persuade me now, at this distance of time, when I can review the decision of my guardians in suitable perspective, that a worse course could possibly have been followed. In the first place, I was too young for such an institution; in the second, mine was not a mind which required forcing: I was too precocious at fifteen and a half years of age, I required education, not instruction; I learned nothing at Wolfram's, but grew rusty in my French. I am certain that at fifteen I should have passed higher into Woolwich than I actually did at sixteen years of age. Nevertheless, we pupils were schooled in all the arts and devices for circumventing the examiners and tackling questions put to us in the most profitable manner.

It was the fashion for candidates for the Army to pretend that they had no chance of passing; revolted by this assumption of false modesty, which I regarded as mere hypocrisy, I, on the contrary, used to declare, after scanning specimens of the examination-papers, that only a fool could fail! In consequence of this, I used to be snubbed and called coxy.

The youths to be met with at crammers' establishments were at that awkward age when adolescent morals and habits are at their worst: the young men were badly in need of discipline, but no Army crammer ever wasted his time on enforcing discipline; thus at Wolfram's I received neither education nor instruction!

There lived in Lee, near Blackheath, in those days a strange old character who kept a tobacconist's shop; he earned more profit, however, by advancing small loans to us boys on usurious terms, against the security of suits of clothes or mathematical instruments: he was the typical Jew of the comic stage, with an enormous nose, a lisp, and a heart like flint! He had, moreover, such a pretty talent for blasphemy that he earned the pseudonym of 'God Damn' and, by his single-voiced efforts alone, promoted Blackheath to be a formidable rival to proverbial Billingsgate! Thanks to his accommodating loans, I learned to frequent theatres and music-halls in London during the week-ends, and once I contrived to slip across the Channel to witness the French Derby at Chantilly, a trip which turned out as profitable as it was enjoyable: I think it was *Little Duck* who bore off the spoils that year.

I hated Wolfram's, and it seemed to me that the six months which I spent there would never pass, but at last the eventful day arrived and I faced the great test, brimful of confidence. In those days the Woolwich examination was spun out over three weeks, and, as candidates had to attend for three hours each morning and evening, I found the strain too much for me; on the twelfth day I had to leave the examination-hall with a splitting headache. Fortunately for me, this happened on the day for the Latin paper, in which I had never aspired to make many marks; nevertheless, I must have lost a dozen places by having to hand in all questions unanswered and by scoring zero in classics. Despite this *contretemps*, to the astonishment of Wolfram and his whole staff of teachers, and although I was only a month over sixteen years of age, I passed easily, being about twentieth from among four hundred and forty candidates. This was accounted a great achievement on my part, and I became reinstated in the good books of my family.

During the winter of 1884-1885, I joined the 'Shop,' as we cadets used to call the Royal Military Academy at

Woolwich, and was at once initiated into the mysteries of the balance- or goose-step and squad-drill while still dressed in civilian morning coat and silk top-hat, pending such time as the master-tailor could contrive to fit me out in uniform. On parade, we were addressed as 'last joined,' but everywhere and at all times we were vulgarly known as 'snookers.'

I found the early rising during the first few weeks most disagreeable and the strict discipline irksome, parades succeeding one another with maddening frequency; the cadet-corporals who inspected us being scrupulously exacting regarding neatness, cleanliness, and general turn-out; but I soon settled down to the life and enjoyed it, the novelty of being treated like a gentleman instead of like a cub being refreshing to me after the slackness and dirtiness of the crammer's establishment.

I was at Woolwich at a time when many of the old customs had begun to pass away, late dinner taking the place of tea squads and the teaching of Latin and Greek being discontinued; but the whole time I was at the 'Shop' we drilled with obsolete, muzzle-loading guns of very ancient pattern, and, when we marched past as a battalion, the rear rank had to lock-up, so that, as we passed the saluting-point, we bore the appearance of automata, our arms being glued to our sides, our legs stiff and unbent, and the rear-rank men's chests being pressed tightly against the backs of their comrades in front, just as in the old Peninsula days.

The Governor of the Academy was a fine old Crimean veteran; having been severely wounded in action, he was permitted to grow a beard, which he wore trimmed to a point; his hair was silvery white, and altogether he looked like a portrait by Rubens or Van Dyck. He was a relation of mine, so, of course, I was invited to lunch at the Governor's House to be introduced to members of the family. On being asked what I should like to drink, I, somewhat rashly, asked for beer; to my horror, the beer was served in a massive silver tankard; I did not know what on earth to do with it,

and I was too shy to ask; I dared not lift the formidable looking flagon to my lips and I feared to tip the ale into a glass, so my thirst went unquenched!

During my first year at Woolwich I contracted the measles, and so missed a term: while sickening for the disease, I was racked with the most distressing cough, and used to dread having to dart across the open back-yard in frosty, foggy weather to my bath, for I was feeling desperately ill. But it was a point of honour with us cadets, on rising each morning, to strip to the buff, winter as well as summer, dash, as naked as when born, across to an outhouse where the baths were situated, plunge into icy cold water, and return dripping to our bedrooms for a rub down; and I dared not shirk the ordeal. I sometimes wonder now why it did not kill me at the time, for I kept up this perilous custom day after day, while the illness was actually on me. Notwithstanding the measles, my health and character were vastly improved by the outdoor exercises, the drills, and discipline during my twenty months at the 'Shop,' and for me the time slipped away only too fast; it might be a good thing for the Army if the Woolwich course were extended to three years.

During the week-ends we could obtain leave of absence, and we used to run up to London to visit the music-halls and theatres. The former were not the luxurious palaces which they are nowadays, but had sanded floors, shabby faded upholstery, and benches with a ledge in front of each seat for pots and glasses. There were no programmes, but a chairman seated with his back to the stage announced the various turns at the top of his voice, after having called for order by striking his desk with a mallet. 'Silence please, gentlemen, the sisters Leamar will appear next!' he would cry, and, 'Pray give your orders to the waiter during the interval!'

The Leamars were pretty girls, and graceful dancers and singers, their most popular number being: 'Go and inform

your father !' sung to the tune of a most fashionable waltz. A generation in which schoolgirls enjoy *Jew Suss* and the *Green Hat* might regard the Leamars' performance as feeble, but we felt, somehow, that we could not repeat their songs to our sisters.

One of the Leamars married the son of a peer who had been a Woolwich cadet, while another was the wife of Captain de Vere Smith, well known on the Turf.

But the great McDermott was the lion of the music-halls in those days. I never heard him sing 'We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do !' – although, in the late 'seventies, the London street-arabs never ceased whistling it; but I often went to the Pavilion to hear 'Charlie Dilke.' McDermott had a voice which reminded me of a pair of broken bellows; he used to gasp and stammer as he sang, jerking himself up and down in time to the music. Nevertheless, he had an inspiring personality; indeed, he must have had some of the spirit of Peter the Hermit in him; it is not sufficient to say that he sang topical songs; he did more than that, he preached a crusade against Gladstone, his lieutenants, and the policy of the Liberal Party. He very nearly brought about another Crimean War, at a time when our Army, commanded by the Duke of Cambridge, was without reserves of men, arms, or ammunition; possessed no transport; was equipped with obsolete, muzzle-loading guns, and had been trained, not for war, but to look pretty and perform evolutions like a *corps de ballet* in the Long Valley at Aldershot or upon Woolwich Common ! McDermott was always a staunch supporter of the Conservatives, and he simply used to mesmerise his hearers, so that in his audience even a normally good Liberal might occasionally be seen, through an atmosphere of tobacco-smoke and fumes of stale beer and whiskey, whimpering at the betrayal and death of Gordon at Khartoum, or mocking the member for Chelsea on account of his vulgar amours, or for having let 'the naughty cat slip

out of the Gladstone bag !' I have seen a queue, stretching from Swan & Edgar's across Piccadilly Circus to Windmill Street, packed so tightly that one might have walked on the heads of the people, waiting to hear the great McDermott taunt Gladstone or quizz Sir Charles Dilke. The Grand Old Man was driven from power quite as much by the insults hurled at him from the music-hall stage as by his blunders in Ireland and Egypt.

Once, during my third term at Woolwich, a party of us determined to slip out of the Academy one night and attend a gala performance at one of the big London music-halls. Most of us who took part in this foolish escapade did so out of bravado, as the penalty, had we been discovered, must have been a severe one; nor was the entertainment, even to our unsophisticated minds, worth the risk, the display being vulgar and wearisome to a degree; indeed, it gave me a distaste for music-halls which has endured. We had to pass some hours of sleeplessness, after the show, wandering about the London streets awaiting the early train back to Woolwich; and weren't we all just thankful, too, for the damp, cheerless, thick yellow fog under cover of which we succeeded in slinking into the 'Shop' enclosure that dull February morning? The squad of defaulters was grinning as we stole past them, working off their 'hocksters' — the cadets' slang name for pack-drill. In quite recent years I ran across a certain distinguished general of R.E. who as a cadet had been one of this reckless party of night-owls: he told me that, whenever he called to mind that adventure, and contemplated what might have been the terrible consequences to his career of detection, his blood ran cold !

The sacred lamp of burlesque was burning at its very brightest at the Gaiety Theatre during my time at Woolwich, and I often enjoyed the privilege of seeing the peerless Nellie Farren leap upon the stage amidst a hurricane of cheers, to draw smiles, and sometimes tears, from her devoted admirers. Kate Vaughan used to 'fetch' us with

her waist,' so slender and elegant was she; and together with Connie Gilchrist, Phyllis Broughton, and the Wilson sisters, kept the stalls packed with 'mashers' – the name given to the exquisite young fops who were never absent from the front rows.

Edward Terry was the leading man at the Gaiety in the 'eighties; in private life he was a pious churchman, but on the stage, with a red nose, tipsy gestures, and a somewhat harsh voice, he used to deplore the melancholy vicissitudes of an ill-spent career and explain that 'life is but a coloured bubble' ! On retiring to more serious comedy, Terry was succeeded at the Gaiety by Fred Leslie, the wittiest, most lovable actor the English stage has ever known. How the 'Gods' loved him ! He died young, and all London went into mourning for him as if for a reigning prince.

I enjoyed the good fortune of being present at the Savoy at the very first performance of *The Mikado*: the enthusiasm was tremendous and the encores persistent until well past midnight ! I have never felt that Gilbert and Sullivan quite rose to the level of Offenbach, and I say this although I only saw *L'Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Grande Duchesse* in revival, whereas I enjoyed *The Mikado* and *The Gondoliers* in all their freshness. Sullivan never had the haunting tune-fulness of Offenbach, and Gilbert seemed to be eternally reminding his audience of his suitability for *les jeunes filles* and flaunting his Victorian prudery: the Savoy lacked something of the delicious seasoning of the Palais Royal !

Henry Irving was the unchallenged head of the English stage through the force of his astounding personality and through that alone, because he was a grotesque figure, stalking across the scene with jerks and halting strides, mouthing and ranting: doing violence to every canon of his art, and speaking a language which was almost unintelligible, owing to his fantastic pronunciation of the most ordinary words. I was always amazed that he was not jeered at or hissed; but the theatre-going public loved him

and tolerated his quaint mannerisms. He must have had a spark of genius to overcome his idiosyncrasies, which would have proved fatal to an actor in any country but England. English audiences, indeed, expect the personality of their favourites to protrude through the disguise of any part; and, when they go to the play, would deeply resent not being able to recognise a Maude or an Aynesworth at his first entry.

I always regarded Charles Warner as the best of all English actors: in *Drink* and in *At the Telephone* he simply froze me with horror!

The 'Shop' possessed the finest cricket team of its whole history in 1885 and 1886, there being three or four county players in the eleven. Nevertheless we were beaten by one run in the match against Sandhurst in 1886: that is to say, we were supposed to be beaten, but Woolwich really won! A boundary-hit – so decreed by the umpire – failed, in the long grass, actually to touch the railings by a few inches; and the cadet scoring for the R.M.C. called the attention of the cadet scoring for the R.M.A. to this fact; whereupon the 'Shop' cadet allowed himself to be cajoled into marking only two runs for us, when, by the rules of the game, he should have scored four.

The drills, military sketching, and instruction at the Royal Arsenal in the methods of forging and constructing the mighty ordnance used by the Artillery supplied me with unending sources of interest during my eighteen months at Woolwich. I look back on my four terms spent there as among the happiest days of my life, and I am puzzled to understand how we could all have been so blind and foolish as to long for the day when we were to receive our commissions as officers: alas! youth is for ever straining at the leash, eager to arrive somewhere.

During our two last terms we cadets were put through a course of riding at the Royal Artillery Riding Establishment. The riding-master was the inevitable product of the British

Cavalry of those days: ignorant, didactic, and a bit of a bully, yet obsessed with the notion that he must temper his severities with a form of humour which consisted of quaintly mixed metaphors. The appearance is indelibly imprinted on my mind of this little tyrant of his arena, as he stood, whip in hand, in the centre of the *manège*, his chest thrust out like that of a pouter-pigeon, with cunning, twinkling eyes and a crimson face crowned by an absurd, muffin-shaped forage-cap, perched, as was the fashion of the day, on one ear, and kept in balance by some miracle – or pomatum – revealing a shiny pate, bald on what might be termed the ‘weather’ side.

I can recall, too, the biting sarcasm with which he emphasised his reproof of an unfortunate cadet who, finding himself overpowered by his unruly mount, was yelling: ‘Woa, woa !’ at the maddened beast.

‘Woa, woa ?’ queried the indignant riding-master. ‘Let’s ‘ave none o’ your ‘unting noises ‘ere, if you please ! Recollect, sir, you’re not at ‘Urlingham, no, nor yet at Sandown Park !’

It is difficult to write temperately of the supremely foolish methods of teaching riding which prevailed in the Cavalry in those days: instead of being taught that the essence of good horsemanship is balance – the balance of the rider, of his mount, and of the two combined – and that the only way to acquire such balance is through gaining confidence, comfort, and security on horseback, the pupil was made to sit stiff and erect in the saddle, with every muscle taut. Beginners, before they had confidence, were forced to ride without stirrups at the trot, which jerked them to pieces and tended to rattle their nerves, the result being that they picked up the habit of holding on like grim death by the reins, thus acquiring from the very start a loose seat and heavy hands. When, after a month or so, stirrups were at last permitted, the length of the leathers was adjusted, not to suit the conformation of the rider’s seat and legs, but the

caprice of the riding-master, who invariably believed that every soldier must have the figure and length of limb of a Life-guardsman. Instead of being advised to be supple in every joint and rapidly to adjust his movements in the saddle to every motion of his horse, the recruit was taught to be rigid; instead of acquiring the practice of fingering the reins as though handling the most delicate and precious of silken threads, he was instructed to clutch at the bridle with an iron grasp as the proverbial drowning man clutches at a straw, thus adding to the discomfort and peril of both the horse and his rider. Indeed, the ignorance of horsemanship and horse-mastership displayed by those responsible for the training of the British Cavalry and Artillery, in the days of which I am writing, was transcendental; the best riders in the Army being Infantry officers – like Captain Roddy Owen – who had escaped the evil influence of the Army riding-schools. Between the flags, the common excuse raised for some maladroitness of amateur jockey was that he was 'only a soldier'!

A tremendous revolution in the methods of Army equitation has occurred during the last five and twenty years, and to-day the instruction given in the riding-schools at Weedon and elsewhere is excellent. The credit for this improvement is largely due to an Artillery officer, General Noel Birch, who, as a cadet, was a contemporary of mine at the 'Shop.'

The verdict of an enquiry, held after the Boer War, was that the horse-mastership of the Artillery was much better than that of the Cavalry; so that the Gunners deserve the credit of the vast reform in both the horsemanship and horse-mastership of the British Army in this generation.

Good features of the riding course at Woolwich, however, were the zeal of the cadets to learn, their courage and patience: precious assets in the character of any horseman!

I have always held my father's memory in the greatest reverence: I was, alas! too young when he died to have

had the benefit of his wisdom to advise me in ethical matters, but, as I know that he delighted in the study of Spinoza, Locke, Voltaire, and Huxley, I conclude that he was what I have always been myself – a freethinker – and I am constantly steeling myself to avow the fact, without giving offence, in any and every company; chiefly because I regard such an avowal as a trial of moral courage, which my father used to declare was the supreme test of manliness.

My mother was a French Canadian, and, when she married my father, could hardly speak English; once, as a child, I heard her snub a sanctimonious clergyman who had ventured to protest because she had used the expression ‘My God’ in the course of conversation. ‘I have heard you and your wife say “Dear Me” quite often,’ retorted my mother, ‘and what’s the difference between “*Mon Dieu*” and “Dear me”?’ To my delight, the parson was dumbfounded. My mother was a Roman Catholic, and, albeit a non-communicant, loathing the priests, was disliked by my grandparents, who had all the Irish Protestant’s contempt for a Papist.

While I was a cadet, the War Office offered some direct commissions in the Engineers and Artillery to undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge who could pass the examination which we had already passed to enter Woolwich. This was so manifestly unfair to us that the Press took up our case, and the examination for these direct commissions was thrown open to the Woolwich cadets of the junior classes. Not many availed themselves of the offer, but those who did brought great honour to the ‘Shop,’ some twelve of the first fifteen places being filled by our comrades: Woolwich administered a heavy defeat to some of the best brains of Oxford and Cambridge!

At last the great day arrived when commissions in the Royal Engineers and Artillery were to be awarded to my class, and I was probably the only one of the fifty cadets to

be gazetted who felt regret at leaving the 'Shop.' I was by far the youngest of the batch, being four months under eighteen years of age; my character was undeveloped and I had never wished to be a soldier. My sympathies, too, were un-English, and I scandalised my comrades in arms by declaring that if war broke out between France and England, I should fight for France. I had been induced to go up for Woolwich because I longed to be free from the trammels of home, and because my guardians had never contemplated my entering any other profession than the Army.

I loved the life as a Woolwich cadet, and instinctively looked forward to the future with apprehension: a life free of care had to be exchanged for one full of responsibility. Before being finally discharged from the Academy as fully fledged officers, we were inspected by a Field Marshal: he was the first I had ever seen, although, at home, we had a portrait of my great-uncle, Field Marshal Sir W. FitzGerald, who had fought at Waterloo.

The veteran of the early Victorian campaigns who passed us cadets in review appeared to me, despite his exalted military rank, to be a grotesque buffoon, more suited to a rôle in an Offenbach opera than to the command of English troops; he was so stout and unwieldy that he had to be hoisted on to his charger by two grooms, and, when mounted, his enormous paunch completely covered the pommel of his saddle. Nothing seemed to interest him save the set of our caps. When one of these ridiculous head-dresses – muffin-shaped and worn on one side – happened to be perched at what the great man decreed was the wrong angle, he would work himself into such a towering fury that we youngsters feared – or perhaps hoped – that he was going to die of apoplexy! I verily believe he would have preferred to command an Army of tailors' models rather than one composed of Cæsar's 10th Legion, Cromwell's Ironsides, Napoleon's Old Guard, and Jackson's Stonewallers! After our march past on parade, word was mysteriously passed around that the

senior commissioned batch of cadets were to assemble in a certain classroom; and, in order that representatives of the Press might not get wind of the business, we were ordered to betake ourselves thither by twos and threes and not to march in a body. Drawn up in a semicircle before the Field Marshal, we were immediately harangued by him with much volubility and a strong German accent, and given a tremendous wiggling for our slackness during the term which had come to an end. We were unquestionably an idle class, and richly deserved our reprimand, but the circumstances and manner of its delivery deprived it of all sting; nor can I call to mind that any single youth present on that occasion regarded the incident in any other light than in that of a huge joke !

Not content with admonishing us lads, however, the old dotard, having worked himself up into a passion, turned to the white-haired governor of the Academy, and, in the most offensive manner, addressing this fine war veteran as if he were a flunkey, screamed out: 'As for you, sir, what the Devil is the good of you ? ' This language struck me at the time as being the very quintessence of vulgarity and lack of self-restraint towards a very gallant old general who was not responsible in any way for our conduct. That my comrades shared my sentiments was apparent from the murmurs which arose, but which were promptly suppressed.

CHAPTER III

AN OFFICER OF THE GUNNERS

She dwells with Beauty – Beauty that must die,
And Joy whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:

His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

JOHN KEATS

I WAS aged seventeen years and eight months when I was gazetted a full lieutenant in the Royal Regiment of Artillery, for there were no second lieutenants in those days; and I was still the youngest officer in the whole British Army, six months after joining.

The first few months of my career as an officer were exceedingly interesting, being spent at Shoeburyness in undergoing the short course in gunnery: we young officers were taught how to mount, dismount, load and fire the monster cannon, besides receiving instruction in handling all the very newest inventions for slaughtering our fellow-creatures. I well remember the Maxim gun being unanimously condemned by the 'blokes' as being useless for war, because of its waste of ammunition. In the Royal Artillery, 'bloke' is the *sobriquet* given to an instructor, or staff officer, of the School of Gunnery.

The weather remained fine throughout that summer, and, most of the very pleasant work being carried on out of doors, we young officers regarded it as a picnic, and larked and gambolled like so many schoolboys; indeed, I giggled and blushed more like a girl on being saluted for the first time by a quartermaster-sergeant – he looked such a swell with

his gold lace and rotund figure, and so much more important than I !

We almost preferred our *alfresco* tasks in gunnery to games, which is very un-English: nevertheless, 'Sticky', a Shoeburyness invention, which was lawn tennis with side and back walls formed of old artillery targets, became such a fascinating pastime, and was so favoured a rival to the older games, that the ordinary lawn-tennis courts and cricket pitches were wholly neglected.

Captain Peter Hamilton was the 'bloke' much beloved. How we youngsters used to pester him to sing: 'The Place Where the Old Ass Died,' on guest-nights ! I often whispered in my heart in those days: 'Peter Hamilton, almost thou persuadest me to be a keen soldier !' Like all the most lovable characters, Peter Hamilton died young, mourned by the whole Royal Regiment.

One rainy afternoon our batch was taken in hand by the adjutant, and given hints as to how an officer must behave on all occasions. I remember that we were warned never to be seen in London except in a black tail-coat and top-hat; never to travel in omnibuses, carry parcels, smoke in the streets, or ride a bicycle anywhere at any time: a man on a bicycle was known in the army as a cad on castors, and a certain officer who attempted to ride one was told by his colonel that he was a disgrace to his regiment !

Of course, the velocipede of the 'eighties, the 'penny-farthing,' was a terrifying mount, with a saddle perched some five feet from the ground above an enormous front wheel, while the hind wheel was only ten inches or so in diameter. Much as I longed to defy the rules for our deportment, so snobbish did they seem to me, I dared not experiment on a velocipede !

At the time when I obtained my first commission, in 1886, the influences of the purchase system were passing away: the good had already passed, the evil were lingering on. In the Royal Artillery the old system had never obtained,

but, in the Cavalry and Infantry, when I joined, there were still many officers who had purchased their commissions; indeed, I remember an unfortunate major of a Line Regiment who was never weary of pouring his woes into the ear of any sympathetic listener. He was regarded as the 'Ancient Mariner' of the garrison; he had bought his first commission, but had been in some way tricked out of all compensation by the Treasury – or so he alleged – on the abolition of the purchase system. I believe he had exchanged from one corps into another.

In this respect, he was not so artful as a famous Gunner officer, who, having passed into the Artillery, had contrived to get transferred into the Infantry, and eventually sold out – thus receiving the price of a commission for which he had never paid a penny.

Nevertheless such was the conservatism of the regimental officers that the abolition of purchase was greeted by them with a storm of protest: moreover, those who were the poorest, and could never have hoped to purchase promotion, were the loudest in their denunciation of the reform.

The abolition of purchase had encouraged schoolboys from every social stratum to aspire to a life in the Army – to become officers, and so ready-made gentlemen; thus competition for vacancies was terrific in the 'eighties, and only the best scholars were able to pass the necessary examinations; hence, gauged by that standard, the material to hand for making officers should have been admirable – though possibly the scholar might turn out to be a prig or a pundit instead of a leader of soldiers in the field. Indeed, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was 'ploughed' five or six times as a candidate for the Army in his youth, so that, albeit his laurels were won rather as a political organiser and administrator at headquarters than as a soldier in the fighting line, the valuable services of this distinguished officer were nearly lost to the nation because he was not good at his books as a child.

An exaggerated importance was attached to dress: in the Artillery, when parading for a heavy-gun drill, we officers were obliged to wear a uniform as unsuited to the work in hand as the hoops and bustles of a mid-Victorian ball-gown might have been to the Maid of Orleans; it was known as a stable-jacket, and was padded and stiffened with whalebone like a lady's corsets, and set off with a stock or collar so high and rigid that it precluded all possibility of the head being turned left or right; for an officer to have stooped to lift the trail of a field-piece, a cataclysm must have occurred to his nether garments. Smartness in dress was so much in vogue that many officers were as vain when posturing in their gold lace and plumes as any *débutante* in her first dancing-frock, and the contrast between the military uniforms and the drab civilian fashions of the day widened the breach separating the Army from the rest of the people; so officers were sneered at by the proletariat and commonly described as gilded popinjays.

The men very naturally aped their officers, and strutted about, clicking their spurs and slapping their legs with their swagger-canes. The fashion of the quiff prevailed among them, and a commanding officer of mine set his face against it: a quiff was a lock of hair, well pomaded, and carefully curled up with a comb over the rim of the forage-cap, or glengarry. I can recall my grim old major, on spotting a bequiffed junior N.C.O. on parade, bawling out: 'Fall out, Bombardier Curley, you look like a bloody Mary Anne !'

It must never be forgotten, nevertheless, that it is through scrupulous attention to smartness in turn-out that discipline has been achieved and maintained in the English Army, and so it is a mistake to be too contemptuous of 'spit and polish.' Foreign armies may be different, but English soldiers, despite their smart appearance, have never been loved as German or French conscripts are loved by their civilian population; it should be borne in mind, however, that conscripts are drawn from all classes of society, whereas it was only the

unfortunate out-of-works, down at heel and perhaps starving, who could be persuaded to enlist in England. 'Tommy Atkins,' as the short-service recruit created by Wolseley was nicknamed, never became popular in England 'until the guns began to shoot !'

There were, generally speaking, two classes of Army officers – those who resigned themselves to a life in their regiments, and others who aspired to staff appointments; and the former, although dull and conventional to a degree, were much the pleasanter companions; the latter, the more zealous, continually courting favour with the seniors and influential folk, were the most unblushing sycophants and disgusting snobs who used to shirk the dull routine of life in barracks and the mess.

Writing to-day, after the experience of two great wars and the Irish Revolution, I have no hesitation in declaring that, when it came to fighting, the regimental officer was a splendid success, and by far the more valuable to the nation in battle; moreover, very often those who were the slackest in peace-time were the keenest in war. The other class of officer which I have described – the ambitious seeker after some prized appointment – was nearly always a failure; he was useless in the firing line, and generally a poor staff officer who irritated and embarrassed the soldier in his work.

When I joined the Royal Artillery, there was a movement on foot, strongly supported by all Gunners, to separate the mounted from the dismounted branch; Horse and Field Artillery officers arguing that the duties to be performed by them were totally different from those required in the Garrison Artillery.

The Garrison Artillery had fallen into disrepute in those days, and rich bonuses were payable for an exchange into the Field Artillery. Despite all the casuistry of the War Office, which boldly asserted that the Garrison was as smart as the Horse Artillery, the former came to be regarded as the refuge of the incompetent slacker, and officers resented

being posted to Garrison batteries on joining or on promotion, as this amounted to a heavy fine for those who aspired to return to the mounted branch. It must be admitted that the duties in the large fortresses on the coast were not inspiring, and we used to grumble at having to attend parade in charge of scarce a dozen men, scraped together from 'fatigue' duties, who took turns at squinting over the sights of an obsolete cannon—for this was all that our drill amounted to. The responsibility for the care of the horses, the riding and driving, the manœuvring with guns and wagons, on the other hand, inspired officers and men with zeal in the Horse and Field batteries, and gave a vastly superior tone to the mounted branch. Undoubtedly the Horse Artillery are supreme in the British Army for smartness and discipline, and, when parading with other troops, are wont to make the rest look like militia.

It can never be denied that the most unblushing nepotism was practised in posting officers, and bitter discontent and jealousy were rife in the Regiment, lowering its *esprit de corps*.

To my bitter disappointment, I was posted to a garrison battery, and my first station was Gibraltar, where, eighteen years previously, I had come into the world. I found the climate delightful, the rides in the cork woods most enjoyable, the bathing in Rosia Bay exhilarating, and I grew daily more robust in health.

During the absence on leave of the Director of Warlike Stores at Gibraltar, I carried out his duties, and so was the witness of a most amazing incident demonstrating how deplorable was the gunnery of the Royal Navy in those days—the 'eighties. We had charge of naval as well as military ammunition, and our instructions were to hand over, without questions or observations, whatever the Navy demanded, provided an officer signed a receipt for what was taken. One day, a new battleship, H.M.S. *Benbow*, arrived; she carried, as well as her 16·25-inch guns, some 10-inch guns, as secondary armament. On the following morning,

a party of bluejackets arrived at our store, and drew several 9·2-inch shells, which, on a perfunctory glance, look very like 10-inch. Twenty-four hours later the *Benbow* put to sea for target practice. An Artillery officer of the name of Parken, having obtained leave to go, as a guest, on board the *Benbow*, witnessed the firing. When the time came to fire the 10-inch guns, it was discovered that the only ammunition available were the 9·2-inch shells drawn from us by mistake; and, directly the first gun was loaded, its projectile slid through the bore into the sea. Notwithstanding this *contretemps*, and to the astonishment of Parken, the sailors, with hearty laughter, proceeded to carry out the practice with 9·2-inch ammunition from 10-inch guns, elevating the muzzles above the correct loading position to prevent the shot from slipping overboard before firing. Naturally this gunnery practice was totally useless, and in all probability damaged the barrels of the guns. This indifference to accurate gunnery was reflected in the Boer War, where the shooting of the Navy was severely criticised by General Hunter.

The routine of garrison duties became intolerable to me; but not so bad as the petty social exactions; I hated them, and I found the gossip of the camp wearisome to a degree. I was not a success in society, and often was guilty of a *gaffe*: one of our field officers had a wife whose Christian name was Kathleen; he also possessed a mare, called *Norah*, which was a great pet; I persistently confused these two names, and once was overwhelmed with confusion when, on tenderly enquiring after Kathleen, I realised that I had been unduly familiar towards the major's wife, when I had only intended a playful allusion to his charger! This was particularly maladroit, because in the household in question, the old grey mare was, undoubtedly, the better horse!

Another brother officer had a handful of a spouse, a peroxide blonde, who prided herself on her French; indeed, when she spoke it, she had an accent more Gallic than the

Tricolor itself ! One day when she quoted something from Pascal, thinking it came from Beaumarchais, I could not help slyly interjecting :

‘Ah, madame, how easy it is to see that you have been to Boolong for a week-end !’ For this I had to submit to a ragging.

I witnessed a wonderful display, on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, on the North Front at Gibraltar in 1887. All the troops parading faced the steepest slope of the Rock, and, after the usual march past, a salute was delivered by the cannon in the galleries. As each gun fired, a jet of flame and smoke spurted out, apparently from the solid cliff which rose sheer from the plain, like the wall of some giant’s castle, and echoes were awakened which reverberated along the Spanish hills in prolonged and impressive thunder.

The late Duke of Clarence, an elder brother of King George V, was a galloper to the Infantry Brigade for the day, and I was performing a similar duty for the Artillery. His Royal Highness had a bad fall, through his horse putting his foot in a hole and pitching him into a puddle of water.

‘I am always unlucky !’ the Duke observed to me, as I helped him to wipe the mud from his uniform.

‘You’re not so lucky as another Duke of Clarence,’ I retorted, ‘for he was flung into wine !’

During my second year at Gibraltar there broke out a military riot which originated in a quarrel provoked by the ribald chaff of an Irish soldier, who, striding up to the counter of the crowded garrison canteen one evening, demanded : ‘ ‘Alf a pint of medals and stars, and charge it up to the 60th Rifles, please, Sergeant !’ The 3rd King’s Royal Rifles being the only troops in the garrison which had seen active service in Egypt, their ire was aroused, and for two days the men fought in the streets of Gibraltar with belts and razors tied to their swagger-canes, the different regiments and batteries taking sides in the dispute. I spent some exciting

hours on picket duty, patrolling the town to keep the peace, but the bad blood engendered by these riots was only allayed by the transfer of one of the battalions to Egypt.

'Ragging' was recognised in the Army in those days as the proper way to suppress the bumptiousness of young officers, or, in extreme cases, to compel someone particularly hateful to his brother officers to leave the Regiment. Such 'raggings' were the sentences imposed by subalterns' 'courts martial': the usual sentence involved spanking the condemned with the bristles side of a clothes-brush, or dragging him through the horse-trough, in the case of mounted troops, or a drain or culvert, in the case of infantry.

I was 'ragged' once or twice, but got off lightly, as I submitted without a struggle. Another young officer of my batch, however, condemned at the same time and by the same court, went mad with passion, and, having broken away from his tormentors, seized a poker and struck the leader on the head with it. For a few minutes we feared that manslaughter had been committed; the abnormal toughness of the British soldier, however, saved the Woolwich Mess from a terrible scandal. My fellow-victim had an exceedingly hard time on account of his outburst, being sent to Coventry and never really forgiven in the Regiment. In the Boer War he behaved with great gallantry at Sanna's Post, being recommended for the Victoria Cross; but he received neither decoration nor promotion, drifted out of the Army, and died a broken-hearted man.

The Woolwich Mess was famous for 'rags' and comic exploits after dinner on guest-nights. On one occasion I helped to lock a certain captain of the Rifles, with vine leaves in his hair, into a huge glass case with stuffed tigers; we then salaamed to him and hailed him as Bacchus. This officer eventually rose to very high rank, but he died somewhat discredited, not for having poured out libations to Bacchus, but through having offered up too many sacrifices to Venus, and, perhaps, too few to Mars !

At Gibraltar, in 1888, I very nearly died of enteric fever, owing to the incompetence of an Army doctor who persisted in treating me for indigestion. I owe my life to a kind-hearted major of the Regiment, who, remarking my sickly mien one day in the ante-room of our mess, called to a civilian physician, who happened to be passing our windows, inviting him to 'come in, have a drink, and take a look at this youngster !' My temperature having been taken, I was found to be in a high state of fever, and was borne in an ambulance to the Naval Hospital. So ill was I, in fact, that I felt quite unconcerned when, one night, the ward in which I was a patient caught fire. Sister Norman, with fine courage, tore down a blazing curtain with her hands. I was almost unconscious, nevertheless I can just remember her sitting by my bedside for half an hour, although she must have been suffering tortures from her poor, blistered fingers, convinced that her first duty was to soothe my nerves. Sister Norman rose to be the head of all the Army nurses, and, through her, I revere them all: they, indeed, are supreme in the heroism manifested in all our wars ! My convalescence was long delayed by an attack of phlebitis, which kept me on my back for six weeks; but youth was on my side, and I came successfully out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. I was carried on a stretcher on board a P. & O. steamer, but on arrival at Plymouth was well enough to run down the gangway and board the London express.

I had been granted three months of sick-leave in order to recuperate after my illness; but three weeks before the expiration of my furlough, I was fit, as merry as a grig, and all agog for mischief ! Most of my evenings were spent in Bohemian society, and in frequenting the theatres and music-halls. The vulgar, violent chauvinism of the Great McDermott had given place to the more subtle humour of Dan Leno, the drollest of the droll, whose merry flashes of

merriment were wont to set London in a roar ! But I had developed a distaste for the music-hall, and much preferred the theatre.

Like all the *jeunesse dorée* worshipping at the shrine of Terpsichore, I fell very deeply and idiotically in love with one of the brightest stars of Burlesque ; but it was not long before I was flung from the glittering heaven of requited love into the red hell of jealousy and despair which is the portion of the scorned lover. The object of my devotion was of that cruel type which is so very common on the English stage, which is known in France as the *allumeuse*, but whose English name is unprintable. She was the greediest of all the greedy daughters of the horse-leech, for ever clamouring : 'Give, give !' She had the soul, though perhaps not the body, of a prostitute, and the conscience of a cheat, and she amassed a fortune at the sport – for sport it was to her ! When, after many months of mental anguish and humiliation, I was awakened from my infatuation by her derision of my earnest devotion, youth's sweet-scented incense of romance had burned away for me, leaving nothing but ashes. In later years, I was assured by an officer of the Guards, who had been fooled to the top of his bent by each of the fairest Gaiety girls in turn, that it was the practice for them to obtain a confidential trade report on the financial status and prospects of any young swell who found his way behind the scenes to seek an introduction ; in the jargon of the City, the aspiring lover was 'put through Stubbs' ! This threw light on what were mysteries to me in my salad days.

While moving in these Bohemian circles, I helped to finance a night-club which became the most celebrated of its day, in London, having been introduced to the business by John Hollingshead, the famous manager of the Gaiety, when that theatre was at the perihelion of its fame and prosperity. John Hollingshead, with his long, silver locks, had the appearance of an archbishop ! Most of

my friends sneered and said that Hollingshead had flattered my vanity to get capital out of me to run the Corinthian Club; however that may be, I made a good profit out of my shares, and have always remembered him as a charming friend with the most courteous manners. Hollingshead was a great showman and an amusing conversationalist; he once told me that the worst paid of all professions was that of a contortionist. 'Why, bless my soul!' said he, in his pompous manner, 'in the East End I will find you a fellow who can swallow himself for fifteen shillings a week!'

At the Gaiety Theatre he had assembled the most exquisitely beautiful constellation which has ever shone behind the footlights, and he used to entertain me with anecdotes of all the lovely stars of which it was composed. Of the prettiest of all, Kate Vaughan, who married the brother of an earl and eventually died a pauper, he used to say: 'I found her performing in a circus with a troupe of Oriental dancers. She was a dear, good-natured girl when first I met her, and was always content with a pork chop and a pint of stout for supper!'

Several of the Gaiety stars made rich or aristocratic marriages; others accumulated funds through actions for breach of promise of marriage. Nellie Farren had a heart about ten times the size of her purse, with the inevitable consequences; many others, too, died penniless; there were exceptions, however, and Phyllis Broughton left, I believe, over £175,000. Actresses are often strange mixtures of vanity, simplicity, and generosity. I remember attending one of Sarah Bernhardt's receptions in the Avenue Perère during the armistice in 1919; at that time she had a great-granddaughter fifteen years of age, so she must have been at least a septuagenarian; moreover, she only had one leg. Kissing the hand of the great *tragédienne*, I remarked:

'Madame, you still have the smile of a young girl!'

'Do you know how,' she replied, in an ecstasy of delight, 'I have contrived to remain young?'

'I cannot guess,' said I. 'Do tell me your secret.'

'It is because I have always had a lover!'

In its early days, the doors of the Corinthian Club were closed to all save actresses and the *demi-monde*; In England, *demi-monde* is a term loosely employed by a society which is too ignorant, too indifferent, or too hypocritical to discern the subtle distinctions between the *grande cocotte* and the *horizontale* – the various grades in 'the oldest profession on earth.' The music was good, the floor was good, the dancing was good, and all the youth of England displayed its silken dalliance at the Corinthian Club at one time or another. It was in one of its quiet corners that Sweet Belle Bilton of the music-halls became affianced to Lord Dunlo, son and heir of the Earl of Clancarty; and there, too, that a conspiracy was hatched to separate this newly wedded pair: a vile plot which was exposed a twelvemonth later in the Divorce Court, when such was the frantic enthusiasm for the triumph of virtue that neither the efforts of the tipstaff nor the threats of the presiding judge were availing to restore order; while, amidst laughter and applause, petitioner, respondent, and co-respondent were reconciled with every manifestation of affection.

Oscar and Willie Wilde were frequenters of the Corinthian Club; Oscar was repulsively ugly, but his brother was uglier! Once, while discussing the latest success of Gabriel d'Annunzio, Wilde was asked why, in his plays and poems, he had never tackled the interesting subject of incest.

'I never write on any matter,' replied Oscar, 'of which I have had no personal experience. And, you see, I am awkwardly situated,' he continued, indicating his brother and sister with a wave of the hand, 'my nearest relations are so very plain!'

At about that time, some of the best French light operas – *Madame Favart*, *La Mascotte*, and *Les Cloches de Corneville* – were being played in London to crowded houses. Florence St. John and Violet Cameron were the great attractions, both being handsome women and singers far above the usual standard of *opéra bouffe*.

CHAPTER IV
SOUTH AFRICA IN 1889

Thou knowest the corners of the jealous earth
Where God has hidden jewels of great worth. . . .

Litany to Satan: JAMES ELROY FLECKER

I HAD been repeatedly assured at the War Office that I should have to return to Gibraltar on the expiration of my leave, but, within a week of its date, I received orders to collect details of troops at Portsmouth and proceed with them to the Cape, *en route* for Mauritius. This change of plans was most vexatious, as all my kit was at Gibraltar; as the Queen's Regulations, however, prescribed that an officer must never be separated from his uniform, I had no case to support a protest, although I had been carried on board the steamer from hospital, quite incapable of attending to my affairs.

At Southsea I collected some five and twenty gunners and escorted them without difficulty by train to London Bridge Station, where I had to pick up a nondescript assortment of warrant and non-commissioned officers – artificer sergeants and suchlike – belonging to the ancillary services of the Army. These were all handed over to me in a disgraceful state of inebriety, and I was faced with the awkward problem of how to transport this tipsy crew through the City to the London Docks, where we were all to embark. I decided to pack them into four-wheeled cabs and march them in procession to Fenchurch Street. It took me some little time to marshal this slatternly company, but cabby entered into the spirit of the affair, not forgetting, however, to exchange gibes with the street-arabs!

My gunners marched off in soldier-like fashion; just as

my 'growlers' moved away from the station in column of route, however, I became aware that an elderly gentleman, with upright figure and cold, grey eye, was contemplating the spectacle with an expression of marked disapproval. The disgusted onlooker was no less a person than Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley, whom I recognised, as he had inspected me amongst the Woolwich cadets three years previously.

At London Docks, on the *Garth Castle*, the ship which was to carry me and my draft to the Cape, I found a bundle of official letters awaiting me; amongst them was an envelope marked 'Secret and Confidential,' which had such a disagreeable appearance that I kept it unopened for a week, until far out at sea; when at last I summoned up courage to break the seal, I found that the contents were from my late commanding officer at Gibraltar, and the memorandum ran thus

'In compliance with Queen's Regulations, I have to inform you that I have reported badly on your conduct to the Commander-in-Chief, under paragraph "O", thus: "self-confidence: too highly developed" !'

I afterwards learnt that, while this report was being considered by the D.A.G. R.A., Lord Wolseley came into the War Office and enquired the name of the young officer whom he had just seen tackling an awkward situation with skill and confidence at London Bridge Station.

With a wanton lack of foresight on the part of the authorities, no precautions had been taken by them to control the charter-party with the owners of the mail steamer under agreement to transport us to the Cape; so, at Lisbon, where we called on the third day of our voyage, we shipped a strong draft of Portuguese troops *en route* for the East Coast of Africa. My men and the Portuguese kept up a continual fight throughout the journey. All my gunners were mere recruits, while the artificer sergeants and warrant officers of

the Ordnance Department were quite useless for the purpose of maintaining discipline; so I had to depend on my own efforts to secure peace, as the Portuguese officers, on their side, flatly refused to interfere with their soldiers; my appeals to them only resulting in the shrugging of shoulders, or most courteous offers of cigarettes.

I contrived to cool down the pugnacity of 'Tommy Atkins' by locking him into a bathroom, and usually found that twenty-four hours of solitary confinement was sufficient to reduce the toughest fire-eater to a state of lamb-like docility! This duty was particularly repugnant to me, as it seemed unjust to punish my poor fellows while the equally guilty Portuguese went scatheless. I had a heart-to-heart talk with my gunners, and soon succeeded in gaining their sympathy and co-operation in maintaining a truce with the Portuguese; but the rest of my charges were recalcitrant, having a healthy contempt for discipline. One of the warrant officers who had given me the most trouble of all at London Bridge, and who had continually boasted that he was only technically a soldier and was a non-combatant, turned out to be an arrant poltroon, and, when this became manifest, all the draft, seizing on the humour of the situation, by common consent christened him 'Non-Combatant,' under which *sobriquet* this unfortunate fellow had in all probability to pass the remainder of his life. His comrades left him to the tender mercies of the 'Greasers.' I wonder they did not kill him!

At Table Bay a cable was handed to me, directing me to remain at the Cape instead of continuing my voyage to Mauritius. This was the proverbial last straw, as my kit left at Gibraltar, as well as a new outfit ordered in London, were both on their way to Mauritius. These constant changes of instructions were exasperating to a degree, especially as, foreseeing serious difficulties with the Irish Court of Chancery, my lawyer had advised me to be present at any cost in Dublin on attaining my majority. These spiteful

pin-pricks inflicted upon me by some petty, capricious War Office official gave me a distaste for soldiering and hastened my determination to resign my commission.

In subsequent years, I have three times over been given a fresh commission in the Army: in the Boer War in 1899; in the Great War in 1914; and in the Irish Revolution in 1920; so I have lived to regret the seniority I lost by the step which I took in 1889; but, as I cast my uniform aside at Cape Town, a bitter, sullen hatred of military methods and military ways surged up in my heart.

Pending the acceptance of my resignation, I was granted leave of absence, and I determined to visit the diamond-fields at Kimberley. Never previously having been accustomed to more than a few hours in a train, I found the railway journey to Kimberley most wearisome, the heat during the daytime being tropical and the cold after dark quite arctic. Nowhere in the world have I experienced such penetrating cold as on the African high veld, the contrast between the temperature when the sun is high in the heavens and that after sunset being acute.

Before rising to the level of the lofty tableland in Cape Colony, and while crossing the valleys where the arum lilies bloom wild, the scenery is gorgeous, but, once on the plateau, it becomes monotonous, and for the first few hours may appear depressing to the traveller: the arid desert stretching away to the horizon, a brown, sandy waste of scorched scrub and boulders; but, as the sultry African day burns to its close and the distant kopjes, capturing different tints from the sunlight refracted through the evening mists, become reddened or gilded by the glint of the setting sun, or are tinged, first purple, then violet in the afterglow, the veld reveals a beauty all its own.

The dust which drifts along in clouds, keeping pace with the advancing train, penetrates into the compartments and is most distressing to passengers; while the engine either seems to pant wearily up the inclines, or dash, like a frightened

steed, down the steep slopes, wholly out of control. For mile after mile no sign of life is visible, for this is the rainless Karoo.

It was my intention to make a very brief stay in Kimberley, as I was most anxious to return to England before attaining my majority in the autumn. I arrived at the world-famous diamond-fields during a period of depression, speculators and brokers being alike in the dumps. Two causes contributed to this state of affairs: the recent unification of the competing diamond companies into De Beers Consolidated, and the slump after the first great Transvaal gold boom. Most of the dealings in the shares of the Witwatersrand companies used to be transacted on the Kimberley Exchange in those days.

There being no railways in the Boer Republics in the 'eighties, Johannesburg could only be reached by mule-drawn coaches from Kimberley, and travellers who had taken the train from Cape Town usually spent forty-eight hours or so in the Diamond City before facing the discomforts of a hot, dusty journey across the veld lasting five days and nights. Johannesburg was a mere mining camp formed of corrugated iron shanties, where the most primitive comforts were unobtainable, the luxury of a bath being only to be enjoyed by those wealthy enough to purchase sufficient Apollinaris water to fill it. No one, consequently, ever went to the Rand except those whose business compelled them to do so, and the 'Bulls' and 'Bears' of the Kaffir market preferred to remain in comfort at Kimberley.

Despite the financial depression, the inherent generosity of diamond-miners was not proof against the introductions I had brought with me, nor have I ever enjoyed such hospitality. Had I possessed sufficient appetite I could have partaken of five dinners every evening. Champagne flowed, and the food at the Kimberley Club, under the management of Tim Tyson, was the best I ever tasted in South Africa. I made the acquaintance of many whose

names have since become household words in the world of finance, and was introduced to a smart young Israelite who, though only twenty-two years of age, had already made his million. Poor fellow ! he met his end in a tragic fashion some years later, being murdered by a blackmailing scoundrel. In those days he was a generous soul.

I was most lavishly entertained by the managing director of one of the mining companies who, under the scheme of amalgamation, had been so richly compensated that he had become a wealthy man. I found him to be an entertaining, hospitable little Jew. During dinner one evening he told me that he had begun life as a clown in a circus, in which rôle his quaintly deformed figure, grotesquely jerky limp, as well as his ready wit, contributed to his success in all the spontaneous drolleries necessary to his difficult profession.

‘What?’ said I. ‘You were once a circus-clown – one of those fellows who wear balloon-like trousers, a conical cap, and a scarlet triangle on each cheek?’

‘Yes,’ he confessed with a sad smile.

‘What? One of those delightful jesters whom everyone loves and applauds, who have to possess more art and science and brains than any actor?’

‘Yes,’ he continued, ‘I was one of those clowns.’

‘And you have come down to being a mere financier?’ I persisted.

‘Yes!’ he nodded.

‘Mon Dieu ! quelle déchéance !’

The full story of this little man’s career is one of the greatest romances of the diamond-fields; he returned to London, where for some years he lived as a popular, wealthy bachelor: a generous host, a patron of the arts, he used to worship at the shrines of most of the Muses; thus, after the Great Boer War, when he had lost the greater part of his fortune in speculation, his collection of paintings, including many Romneys, realised £100,000.

I was shown the De Beers' sorting-room, where I saw more diamonds spread upon the table than ever I supposed existed in the world. I was told nevertheless, that it was only a single month's output: I marvelled why diamonds were worth more than walnuts! Nowadays the crumbled blue ground, or matrix, containing the precious stones, is washed over an inclined plane smeared with wagon-grease, to which the gems adhere, but in those days the dirt was whirled round in revolving basins, the lighter matter being separated from the heavier by centrifugal action. I was lowered down the shaft of a mine, after having contemplated from its edge the greatest hole ever dug by the hands of men, a hole in which St. Paul's Cathedral might easily be buried. I was conducted through the native camps, where the advantage of the compound system was explained: I must admit that the scrupulous attention with which the overseers spied upon the negroes in the intimacy of their hours of rest and relaxation, and the meticulous care with which the blacks were overhauled when coming off shift, struck me as being unspeakably degrading.

To protect the property of the mining companies, the savage I.D.B., or Illicit Diamond Buying, Act had been placed on the Statute Book of Cape Colony: it deals with every offence, from pilfering to being in unlawful possession of the gems, and involves penalties of such harshness and cruelty that they are out of harmony with the humanitarianism of the age. Of course, the temptation to steal a tiny article which can be easily concealed on the person, or, at a pinch, even swallowed, and which may be easily worth a fortune to a negro, is all but irresistible, so that in the extreme severity of the punishment lies the only deterrent. This law, notwithstanding, is regarded throughout the world as so inhuman that it only obtains in the Cape Colony, and the delinquent, once across the frontier, need never fear extradition for I.D.B.

Despite its inhumanity, there was no one to object to the administration of this brutal law, because the Cape was held fast in the clutches of the De Beers octopus, which spread its tentacles to seize every party or institution: in the Press and in politics, in those days, De Beers was supreme. I came away from this little world of diamond-diggers with an ill-defined feeling that something was wrong with its moral order: there seemed to be something inhuman about everyone I met. I had enjoyed Kimberley's hospitality, but it left a nasty taste in my mouth!

A few weeks later, as the mail boat steamed out of Table Bay carrying me back to England, while contemplating the beauty of the 'Lion's Back' and Table Mountain, there came into my mind an old African saying: 'Drink of the Nile Water, and you must drink of it again!' and I wondered whether I should ever revisit Africa – whether the call of the veld would reach me across the ocean.

On arrival in London during August 1889, I was advised by my lawyers to keep out of the way until coming of age in the following November; I accordingly went to Homburg with a friend. In those days Homburg was the favourite resort of the Prince of Wales and his set for taking a cure. All the handsome ladies who used to take part every Christmas in the Guards' burlesque at Chelsea Town Hall were pretending to take the waters too: there were the lovely Miss Savile-Clarkes, Lady Webster, and Miss Sybil Coke, afterwards the wife of Charlie Crutchley, of the Scots Guards, who lost a leg in the Nile campaign.

While at Homburg that summer, General Duff, R.E., an old brother-officer of my father's, tried hard to persuade me to transfer from the Artillery into the Blues, offering to introduce me to Lord Arthur Somerset of that regiment; but the prospect of service in the Household Cavalry offered no attractions to me; indeed, the idea of my five feet five inches of manhood becoming an officer of cuirassed giants struck me as being irresistibly funny!

On November 5th, 1889, I came of age, and at once made my way to Dublin. To my dismay and disappointment, I found, on consulting the agent of my estates and my Irish lawyer, that it must take months, possibly years, to release my property from the trammels of the Chancery Court.

It is difficult to bring home to anyone who has not had experience of the law the worry and despair which can be engendered by the delays of a Chancery suit. That worry and despair were mine for seven long years after coming of age. I haunted the Four Courts in Dublin; I pestered my legal advisers. In flesh and blood I played, in a real world, those grimly tragic rôles so sorrowfully described by Dickens in a world of fiction in *Bleak House*; I was, in turn, Richard Carstone, Miss Flite, and the Man from Shropshire; my friends, in chaff, used to call me 'Jarndyce'!

When some four years had elapsed, it was decided to make an application for a sale through the Land Court to provide funds to meet law expenses: this decision seemed to infuse fresh perversity into the demon of procrastination and seven times over did presiding judges call for evidence of my legitimacy; and once, when a new president of the court was appointed, my heart sank on hearing his lordship comment, on taking up my case for the first time, thus: 'I cannot, for the life of me, understand how the applicant can have any title to this estate!'

Carried away by my exasperation, like my prototype in *Bleak House*, I sprang to my feet and addressed the court, complaining how my life was being embittered and rendered useless by the torturing delays; how the redundancy of the proceedings savoured of ploughing the sands. I reminded the president that the court had already been engaged on my case for more than ten years: that period having elapsed since my grandfather's death. I am not sure that I was not guilty of contempt; but his lordship, albeit ruling that he could not hear me, was most courteous and forbearing; he

hinted, too, with a merry twinkle in his eye, that he might be less deaf during the adjournment for luncheon !

A friendly chat with the judge in his private room acted as a tonic to my depressed spirits ; he strongly advised me to turn my thoughts and activities as much as possible away from my case, and he further counselled my selling my estates by private contract: this he believed to be feasible, as the property consisted of head-rents in Dublin and its vicinity.

It was, indeed, by these means that I eventually succeeded in escaping from the meshes of Chancery.

This account of the progress, or the lack of it, in the matter of my suit has carried me ahead of the regular course of my narrative, and I must return to the year 1890 to pick up the thread of my tale.

CHAPTER V

STEEPLECHASING IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE

Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? . . .

He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

Job xxxix. 19 and 25

WITH a view to endeavouring to shake off the black depression which encompassed me, as a consequence of the delays and worries of my Chancery suit, I determined to adopt an entirely different mode of life.

My father's devotion to animals and fine horsemanship had bred in me a delight in riding; so, soon after leaving the Army, I indulged the luxury of sharing with a friend a hunting-box in the Blackmore Vale for six months; but I gathered but a meagre return for my outlay in gear and horseflesh, as the winter was very exceptionally severe; nor can I remember taking part in more than two or three runs with any real pleasure to myself. I finished the season with a feeling of disappointment. I detested the cruelty to the fox, never having been a sportsman in the true sense of the word: I mean that I cannot derive any pleasure whatever from tracking any creature, beast or bird, to its death. I realise, nevertheless, that it will be a disastrous day for the manhood of England when hunting is banned, as are bull-baiting and cock-fighting. It will be a bad day, too, for bold reynard, because the last fox will have been shot or trapped within a few months of the final prohibition of blood-sports, and will have become as extinct as the British wolf.

Thus it came about that I resolved to abandon hunting and devote my attention to steeplechase-riding. I have

lived, however, to regret my decision, and to-day I would far rather attend a meet of fox-hounds than any race-meeting. I love the scarlet coats displayed by the servants and members of the hunt, with all their colour, movement, and gaiety; the hounds, with their waving sterns and soft eyes, so gentle, singly and individually, so fierce in a pack when on the line of a fox, giving tongue, their hackles stiff and erect—the very embodiment of ferocity! I admire the dignified deference of the huntsman, his ways with his hounds, his voice in rating or encouraging them. I am even fascinated in watching the petty vanities of *homo sapiens* and the female of the species: the unsuspecting youth wrapt in ecstasy at the contemplation of his own most exquisite boots; some fair Diana of the chase pre-occupied with repairing the ravages of time or the shortcomings of nature with her well-worn lip-stick, all heedless or contemptuous of the curious glances of expectant rustics. Everything about hunting is healthy and good; much about the Turf is sordid and vile!

By a stroke of good fortune, at the time of which I am writing, I obtained, through the good offices of a friend, an introduction to Mr. Harry Lindé, the well-known owner and trainer of racehorses, who was for many years the squire of Eyrefield Lodge on the Curragh, the hospitable and sympathetic host of all sporting Irishmen, and the terror of all his rivals at the sport of kings. I well remember the first time I ever met 'Farmer' Lindé. It was on a Sunday, and I had run down by train from Dublin to spend the day, the afternoon being passed in visiting the stables and inspecting the thoroughbreds at Eyrefield Lodge. At about 6.30 p.m., I reminded my host that I must catch the seven o'clock train back to Dublin.

'Why wouldn't the nine o'clock suit you as well?' remarked Lindé. 'Stay and have some supper!'

At 8.30 p.m., looking uneasily at my watch, I ventured to observe that I had better be off. 'Ah, now!' quoth Lindé,

'Stop till the ten o'clock train, and we'll have some punch and a song or two in the meanwhile !'

My host obliged the company, consisting of Beasleys and Cullens, all famous riders between the flags, with 'I met her in the garden where the praties grow.' Willie Cullen replied with 'Patrick, mind the baby, Patrick, mind the child !' and this started us all off with choruses until we had grown too hoarse for singing, and by then, to my consternation, it was past ten o'clock. 'Never mind the time,' cried Lindé, with a twinkle in his eye, ladling out the punch, 'wait for the train at midnight !'

Then at last it dawned upon me that I had been fooled, that all these convenient, hourly trains on Sunday night from the Curragh to Kingsbridge existed only in my hospitable friend's imagination, and so I had to accept a shakedown for the night.

Similar practical jokes were repeated night after night until my Sunday visit was extended into a week's jollification.

On the second day I made a bet with Mrs. Lindé that I would clear on foot the gorse jumps on the schooling ground, where the Eyrefield Lodge 'chasers used to be trained for the Liverpool and Punchestown races, and, although bristling with thorns and prickles, like quills upon the fretful porcupine, after my achievement, it was decided that I had won my wager.

The next day I was given a mount with the Kildare hounds, and followed a splendid hunt arrayed in town togs, with my trousers rucked up to my knees, my legs raw from chafing against the saddle, and my hat crammed down over my ears. I had the great misfortune that day to break my hunter's leg, jumping into a road; the poor beast had to be shot, and I had a long, weary tramp back to Eyrefield Lodge with saddle and bridle over my arm. Never shall I forget the feeling of depression and humiliation with which I wound my way up the drive to the stable-yard, nor the

cheery, forgiving welcome Lindé gave me: 'Thank God you were not hurt yourself!' was all he said, the generous soul!

I subsequently spent many months with this kind old Irishman, and became familiar with his ways and methods of training racehorses. Friends have pestered me to reveal the secrets of this wizard's successes on the Turf; but there were no secrets. He simply used to feed his charges on the very best oats and hay which money could buy, and he would gallop them as long as they possessed legs to stand upon. Indeed, sad to say, he broke down a great many horses; on the other hand, he won an extraordinarily large number of races. I think it was in 1895 that five horses were despatched to Manchester from Eyrefield Lodge, and seven prizes were brought home after only two days' racing.

It must be remembered, too, that in those days he was probably entertaining angels unawares, Irish-bred horses being regarded at that time as mere hunters or hurdlers; whereas, probably, some of the thoroughbreds raised by Mr. Gubbins in County Limerick, and trained on the Curragh for events at Baldoyle or Punchestown, might have had speed and stamina enough to win classic races or handicaps at Newmarket—the chaser *Spahi*, for instance, may well have been as good a horse as *Galtee More*, the Derby winner of 1897.

On one occasion, I recollect overhearing the following conversation, when Lindé ran across a rascally, impoverished, old horse-dealer in Newbridge, from whom he had recently purchased a mare:

'Terence,' quoth the squire of Eyrefield Lodge, 'devil a bit of flesh can I get on that mare I'm after buying of yez! I've tried linseed-oil. I've tried cod-liver-oil. I've tried molasses. She's just skin and bone. What'll I do?'

The old copper eyed his questioner with an expression sphinx-like in its imperturbability: 'Did yez iver try oats, Mr. Lindé?' he enquired, as bland as though addressing Mistress John Gilpin of frugal mind.

My old friend had a pretty taste in satire; and once, in referring to an exquisite gentleman – a veritable latter-day Beau Brummel amongst the Newmarket trainers – remarked, ‘I hate that man; he wears evening clothes!’

One day I witnessed a great match, over the schooling course, between the hero of my tale and a well-known Irish master of fox-hounds who subsequently lived to own two Derby winners.

At the third fence there was a collision between the two competitors – they were both of them sixteen-stone men – and before we could realise what had happened both jockeys were on the floor! Lindé was speedily hoisted by willing hands back into the saddle, not so his rival. ‘Get on wid yez, Governor!’ screeched the stable-lads. ‘Sure yez can’t lose now; Willie’s run off with Mr. Gubbins’ mare – she’s half-way home by now!’

True enough, a zealous, if cunning, backer of Lindé’s had seized his rival’s mount while loose, and, with a cut from an ash-plant, had sent her scuttling away towards her stable at a smart canter, what time John Gubbins was still rubbing out his bruises and gathering his wits!

There was a beautiful horse in the stables in those days, named *Red Prince*; he actually, as a four-year-old, won the big Easter-Monday steeplechase at Manchester, and his owner made up his mind that the Auteuil grand prize, which is raced for in Paris in June, was as good as his own.

Lindé, at that time, if not actually old, was considerably aged; he disliked going far from home, but the temptation of leading in the winner once again before he died, of the greatest steeplechasing prize in the world, was too strong to be resisted by the old sportsman, so he determined to brave the terrors of the long journey to the French capital, to revisit the scene of previous triumphs, and to revive, perhaps for the last time, some sensations of his salad days! With the lively recollection of sunny afternoons spent in former years amidst the shady groves of Chantilly, or the

Bois de Boulogne, where, as a young man, he had witnessed and possibly envied, the dandies attired in faultless, grey frock-coats and chimney-pot hats, paying their court to lively Parisiennes, he felt it incumbent upon him to be dressed for the occasion, albeit in the sere and yellow leaf of the autumn of his days. He, accordingly, summoned from Newbridge an antediluvian tailor, who usually practised his arts upon the stable-lads in the neighbourhood of the Curragh.

Alas ! Lindé's judgment as an *arbiter elegantiarum* was by no means so sound as his skill in fitting a saddle ; not otherwise would he have confided the delicate task of having his person rigged out in the latest fashion to a cutter with so limited a repertoire as old 'Pat Snip,' as the urchins used to call him. The interview between the unsophisticated, but aspiring, dandy and the ancient tailor took place in my old friend's bedroom, whither I had been invited to attend and offer advice.

As obstinate as a mule, old 'Pat Snip' could not, or would not, understand his customer's requirements. On the other hand, Lindé was not exactly lucid in explaining his wishes, and not a little ashamed of this indulgence of his vanity. 'Mind yez, Patsy, I want to be a bit of a masher. I'll be leading in the winner of the big race,' explained Lindé, visions of the forthcoming triumphant scene taking shape in his imagination, 'And all the *Parley Voos* will be envying me, and all the pretty girls will be ogling me !' continued the proud owner of *Red Prince*. 'Besides, it'll be mightily hot weather !'

Without a smile, the old fellow, tape in hand, contemplated his client with a pitying, contemptuous expression : 'Is it a cricketing suit ye're wanting at your age?' he sneered.

Many an anecdote of old celebrities, heroes of the Turf, human as well as equine, was narrated to me over bowls of punch, in the dining-room at Eyrefield Lodge, of an evening : tales of how the ill-fated Empress of Austria, with a cry of

delight, had spontaneously supplied the name, *Too Good*, for a certain black and comely colt which she saw leaping the 'Liverpool' fences as a two-year-old; of how Tom Beasley had won the Grand Steeplechase in Paris on *Whisper Low*, the best 'chaser of all time, according to Tom, though she nearly fell at the water.

But the best yarn of all was that which described the trial of *Pride of Kildare* for the Grand National, and this is the story.

The late Garrett Moore was a finished horseman – one of the very finest who ever won at Aintree – but he possessed tastes incompatible with the pursuit of race-riding as a profession: he was a good trencherman, and, like Monsieur de Bassompierre, on occasions, could drink deeply of good liquor.

Mr. John Hubert Moore, of Jockey Hall, Curragh of Kildare, the father of those two celebrated cross-country riders, Garrett and Willie Moore, was a fine old-fashioned sportsman, but he was the traditional Irish parent – a stern, unbending tyrant, who used to sweat his children as no profiteering Jew has ever dared to sweat his chlorotic factory-girls; so that, when it came to facing him, Garrett Moore, who feared neither horse, man, nor devil, became like Ben Bolt's sweet Alice: he wept with delight when John Hubert gave him a smile, and trembled with fear at his frown!

Jockey Hall, in 1878, harboured two great 'chasers, *Liberator* and *Pride of Kildare*, and the old man hoped that in the latter he possessed a potential winner of the Grand National; but hope is a Christian virtue which has never claimed the more substantial qualities of charity, and, with John Hubert Moore, charity began at home – that is to say, charity at the expense of the bookmakers; so it came about that, anxious to translate his hopes into certainty, the lord and master of Jockey Hall resolved, by way of clearing up any doubts, to gallop *Pride of Kildare* with

Liberator on the steeplechase trial ground near the Curragh; a day and an hour when no unwelcome spectators could be present were accordingly fixed for the important test.

It was decided that Tom Beasley should ride *Liberator*, while Garrett Moore was to have the leg-up on *Pride of Kildare*.

Knowing Garrett's frailties, the old man, determined that his son should be fit and seasoned for the task, locked him into his bedroom at 8.30 p.m. on the eve of the gallop.

Eyrefield Lodge is situated about a mile from Jockey Hall, as the crow flies, across the Curragh, and at Eyrefield Lodge there dwelt 'Farmer' Lindé and the brothers Beasley.

It so happened that on the very night, while the prisoner of Jockey Hall was fretting his soul out, Lindé was giving a party to which Garrett had been invited; moreover, when Lindé gave a supper the table groaned under the weight of the choicest viands, and lashings of good liquor flowed.

As the hours rolled by and the guest from Jockey Hall failed to put in an appearance, Lindé, guessing what had happened, proposed that a rescue should be effected.

'Out you go, boys; slip saddles on the hacks and bring back Garrett along with you; there's always a ladder handy at Barney's. Mind, now, you don't be wakening John Hubert!'

Within half an hour, Garrett, like the heroine of a once popular ditty, with a lad and a ladder, had managed to creep over the garden wall, and was hard at it, punishing with gusto 'John Jameson,' and courting Dame Fortune at halfpenny Nap in Lindé's parlour.

The fun was fast and furious, and it was past three o'clock when the party broke up, and past four when, shinning up the ladder, Garrett, with oaths and hiccoughs, sneaked back through his bedroom window.

At five o'clock, Old Man Moore was hammering on the door, and, by a quarter to six, Garrett and Tom Beasley were leading *Pride of Kildare* and *Liberator* out of the stable-yard.

A thick fog was hanging over the Curragh. John Hubert, with his chin buried in his muffler, contemplated the outlook, and, like Goethe, sighed for more light.

'We must get on with this job, boys, anyway; you can see thirty yards ahead, and that's enough for your lepping.'

'Be sure now, Tom, that you go a good gallop! 'Tis no good unless you come right through!'

'Glory be to God! my hat's too tight, and it's a sinking feeling I have in my stomach!' groaned Garrett. 'I wish I'd had just a "wee one" before starting out!'

'I did,' retorted Tom Beasley, 'come on now!'

The old man, stationing himself on a mound to watch the finish, strained his eyes to penetrate the mist, and his ears for the thud of hoofs and the swish of the leaps.

Garrett longed for, but lacked, that courage so esteemed by Napoleon — *le courage de trois heures du matin* — so, when the two 'chasers, tearing at their bits, headed for the first fence, Garrett edged away on to the track inside the steeplechase-course, and, except for the one jump within sight of his father, had his trial to himself on the flat, what time Tom Beasley conscientiously steered *Liberator* over the country.

At the end of four miles and a half, *Pride of Kildare* was twenty lengths in front, and she passed the old man going well into her bridle and but little distressed.

Old Man Moore's eyes glistened. 'How did she lep, Garrett?' he asked.

'She never put a foot wrong, nor touched a twig!' Garrett truthfully replied.

By nine o'clock, a beetle-browed gentleman, smelling of Guinness, portentous and bursting with the good news, started out for Dublin from Field's Hotel, and by noon the wires were palpitating with messages to Sheffield, Manchester, and London, while the pencillers throughout the kingdom were busy making entries in their books.

The odds were five to one against *Pride of Kildare* when she started for the Grand National of 1878; all Ireland was on

her, and there was a confident smile in the eyes of the Dark Rosaleen; but, alas ! she finished a bad ninth, having fenced atrociously.

John Hubert Moore, his chin buried in his chest, was sitting by the peat-fire in the parlour at Jockey Hall some weeks later, when there entered to him 'Farmer' Lindé.

'I hope you did not lose much money on my mare,' said the old man.

'No, no !' replied Lindé. 'I hadn't her backed. I did not fancy her.'

'Now I wonder why he said that !' mused John Hubert Moore.

In those days, Mr. Tom Beasley used to 'witch the world with noble horsemanship'; but when I knew him he had married and given up steeplechase-riding; nevertheless, he still rode exercise with Lindé's string of racehorses, and, each morning, on the Curragh, I used to enjoy the privilege of watching him coax a nervous two-year-old to stride out freely and kindly, or drive some lazy, sulky, old selling-plater into his bridle. Of all the Beasleys, Tom had the best and coolest head for racing; he seemed to know how each horse in the field was going. Not only did he win three Grand Nationals, and finish second or third many times, but he was of the greatest service to his brother when Harry Beasley won on *Comeaway*; riding *Cruiser* that day, he served as a pilot all the way, giving his brother openings when opportunities occurred.

Tom used to say that the best place in a race at Aintree is on the rails – just because so many of the jockeys think that it must be the worst position; moreover, the fences are weakest there. But the rider who selects the inside berth must remember to edge away towards the middle of the course after clearing Becher's Brook, so that he may be able to take the 'Pond' fence, which is at the canal-turn, on the slant, otherwise, if in front, he may be unable to straighten his mount for the next obstacle, Valentine's Brook, and may

even find himself in the canal. If, on the other hand, he be waiting on the leaders on the inside, all the field will jump across him and balk him.

All the Beasleys had perfect 'hands,' the most fidgety horse seeming to go smoothly and quietly, with his head in his chest, when Tom, Harry, or Willie Beasley was in the saddle. *Frigate* was a case in point: no one but a Beasley could ride her – at least, none but a Beasley ever won on her. And they all rode with very long reins and very long stirrups – as in like manner did all the best horsemen of those days: Mr. George Lambton and Captain Roddy Owen, for instance. Indeed, one was impelled to believe that very long reins and very long stirrups were a *sine qua non* for good 'hands,' until Tod Sloan, the American, came on the scenes and upset all our pet theories on race-riding. It may be said that what Copernicus was to astronomy, Sloan was to the 'far more important' science of jockeyship – he caused a revolution. Howbeit, the Beasley brothers, between them, took part in thirty-three Grand Nationals, and, between them, only suffered three falls, though they won four times and were very often placed. Arthur Nightingall, too, one of the very finest of steeplechase-riders who ever won over the Aintree track, and who had the best seat over a big jump which I have ever seen, used to aver that horses do not fall, but jockeys pull them down ! And no rider ever had fewer falls than Arthur Nightingall, and no one ever rode with longer reins.

There is, of course, plenty of room on the wide course at Aintree, so there should be little fear of being blinded at a fence; the chief dangers being falling, refusing, and riderless horses; but these are always present, and jockeys like Tom Beasley, Arthur Nightingall, and Percy Woodland excelled in avoiding them; it is difficult to explain how they did so, yet it cannot have been sheer luck. Tom Beasley, for instance, was never in difficulties, whereas his brother Harry was often in the wars.

No family has produced as many first-class steeplechase-riders as the Woodlands, who are, I believe, gipsies; yet, of them, only Percy won the Grand National, and, judged by the records of his achievements in France and England, on the flat and across country, he may possibly have been the greatest jockey of all time. Nevertheless, no one has ever impressed me as Tom Beasley did – and I have seen and ridden against all the greatest riders of my generation. I believe him to have never had an equal, whether compared with horsemen of the past or the present day.

One of the most celebrated soldiers who ever won at Aintree was Captain Roddy Owen – not so much on account of his great skill, but because of his remarkable personality. He fathomed all the depths and shoals of popularity; he was able to wheedle anything out of anybody; by flattery, he could coax the promise of a mount in a race out of a reluctant owner, or furlough out of the most hard-hearted martinet of a colonel. The Army used to rock with laughter at the anecdotes recording Roddy's devices for cajoling too indulgent commanding officers: at the tales of how, having absented himself from duty, he had adopted some ludicrous wile or stratagem whereby he might be held blameless or forgiven. After winning the Grand National, Captain Owen never rode again between the flags, but devoted himself zealously to soldiering. He died in 1896, up the Nile,¹ as a result of eating tinned salmon which was tainted. Had he survived, he would assuredly have made his mark in the history of the last thirty years. What a diplomat he might have been to outwit Oom Paul or Kaiser Wilhelm. Why, he might have saved us from two wars!

Although the Beasleys and Woodlands, when riding between the flags, used the courtesy title of an amateur, none of them disguised the fact that he rode races for

¹ The Owen Falls on the Nile, near the bridge between Kenya and Uganda, are called after Captain Roddy Owen.

profit.¹ Mr. Tom Beasley, for instance, passed as the manager of Lindé's racing stable at Eyrefield Lodge; but Dan McNally, the real head-stableman, used to remark with scorn: 'Sure Mr. Tom mightn't know which end a horse eats out of!'

It is a trite saying that one of the hardest tasks is to define a gentleman; it is even more difficult to define a gentleman-rider. A cynical friend of mine, in weighing up the difference between jockeys and amateurs, used to conclude thus: 'A professional holds out his hand in front for his fee, but the amateur puts his hand behind his back for his!' In France, in the prevailing jargon of the world of sport, *un gentleman* has come to mean a gentleman-rider, just as *un fox* signifies a fox-terrier, or *un bull* a bull-terrier. In this connection, I well remember the gate-keeper at Colombes races, a picturesque old warrior, a veteran of the Mexican campaign, with fierce, waxed moustaches and a *barbiche* or *impériale*, who, sublimely ignorant of the true meaning of the words he was using, enquired of all who approached him: '*êtes-vous gentleman?*' And every soul, including the most notorious wittols and swindlers of Paris, made reply in the affirmative.

Howbeit, many amateur steeplechase-jockeys in my day, whose social status and private fortunes placed them unchallenged in the ranks of gentleman-riders, had so much practice between the flags, and became so skilled and experienced, that it is hardly fair to classify them in the same category as the soldier-officer or hunting man who occasionally has a bump round the course for sheer love of the game. Personally, I never aspired to become more than the merest amateur; nevertheless the experience I gained on the galloping tracks of the Curragh stood me in good stead on many a race-course in later years in England and France; but, alas! I was by no means as good a

¹ The stricter rules nowadays forbid a gentleman-rider from making any money out of race-riding.

horseman as my father, whose sublime patience and superb 'hands' I often longed to possess; and, although I improved with practice, horses which should not have pulled, were restless and pulled with me. Thanks, however, to Arthur Nightingall, with whom I rode many a 'school' on Walton Heath, I learned the art of slipping the reins at the exact, psychological instant when my mount took off at a fence during a steeplechase; and this device, which leaves his head free so that the horse can gather himself together on landing, and even save himself from a stumble, was invaluable to me; indeed, I was singularly lucky during my riding career, and in the last fifty-seven obstacle races in which I took part I did not have a single fall.

I used to suffer intensely from nervousness while awaiting the start, and can remember feeling quite sick with fear while parading for the Prix Montgomery in Paris and the Grand National at Aintree; but I always recovered nerves and good spirits directly the flag fell, and the gallop was real joy!

Howbeit, the first race in which I ever rode was a victory for me; as, though falling off at the third fence, I won, after remounting, quite handsomely by six lengths. I netted £28 in stakes, but, being 'welshed' of £20 in bets, and having a valuable pearl scarf-pin stolen from the dressing-tent, I cannot be said to have reaped much profit.

I had one bad accident at Catsfield races, dislocating my shoulder, and another at Sandown Park where – albeit such a contusion argues the existence *a priori* of a cerebellum, which many might deny to steeplechase-jockeys – I suffered concussion of the brain. I experienced a great deal of pain and inconvenience from my dislocated shoulder, and the consequences endured for some years; but finally I remedied it, on the advice of Wharton Hood, the eminent surgeon, by taking long swims in the sea, using the breast-stroke; in the process of my cure I became quite a fair

long-distance swimmer, and once in Jersey swam across St. Aubin's Bay.

In the autumn of 1896, I bought *Bonnie Dundee*, a good-looking three-year-old, from Mr. Tom Coppinger of County Cork; but he turned out an incorrigible rogue. During the winter I schooled him to fly hurdles so smartly that no horse in Joe Widger's stables at Portslade, where he was trained, could approach him at that game. At Gatwick, I backed him to win me £2,000 in a maiden hurdle-race, but I was beaten by a neck by Arthur Nightingall on a young horse of Lord Cowley's. The professional jockey, of course, quite outrode me; but I certainly should never have obtained eight to one to my money had I not ridden myself; besides, as was subsequently proved, the best jockey in the world might not have won on him, as *Bonnie Dundee* had the malevolent trick of refusing to run his races out at the finish; thus he was beaten again and again in precisely the same way – notably at Derby, Kempton Park and Liverpool – in big hurdle-handicaps, with George Williamson in the saddle, and when all the 'heads' backed him for pounds, shillings and pence!

As a rider, I never had a good Press, and the sporting journalists used to write almost insultingly about me; I never cared a straw, however, for their comments, as I rode solely for my own pleasure, and it has always been a matter of sublime indifference to me whether the egregious backer lose his money, or that social parasite, the book-maker. Besides, I have always had a perverse, cynical fancy for being unpopular on the Turf.

I remember once at Kempton Park, while riding in a hurdle-race, a young apprentice of Sam Darling's was twice saved by me from falling off his horse; he had lost everything – reins, stirrups and balance – and must have kissed Mother Earth had I not reached out and caught him by the slack of his racing jacket and pulled him back into the saddle. Nevertheless, after the race, the Pressmen

declared that the lad had 'shaped very well,' whereas I was sneered at with their usual unfairness and vulgarity.

On another occasion, when I was just beaten on a third-rate selling-plater, called *Day Star*, by Charlie Beatty on *Peter Melville*, I was said to have been completely outridden; however that may be, *Peter Melville* subsequently won three open handicaps off the reel, beating high-class 'chasers; nor can there be any doubt that Beatty should have won the selling-race by many lengths instead of a neck. The sporting writers were certainly less courteous than they are to-day: Mr. Harding Cox, a very fine sportsman, having been jeered at and insulted by them on many occasions, only because he rode races for his own pleasure. These gentlemen seemed to consider that owners should run horses solely for the amusement and profit of the unsavoury gang of pickpockets, swindlers, professional backers, and loafers who frequent racecourses.

In the spring of 1897, I had a great stroke of luck, which arose through my letting a couple of my loose-boxes for the summer meeting at Epsom, where I had a few old platers in training. I was keeping fit, by riding exercise on the downs every morning during the race week, in preparation for some 'chases I had undertaken to ride in France during the month of June. It so happened that, after the morning's work on Tuesday, I strolled into our stable-yard at Priam Lodge just as Jennings' candidate for the Woodcote Stakes, hooded and sheeted, was being led in from the hill.

'What's that?' I enquired.

'*Orzil*, a two-year-old of Mr. Brassey's,' replied the lad in charge. 'And a nice colt he is, too, sir, and sure to win to-day!'

That afternoon, on the course, I staked ten pounds, and had the satisfaction of winning eighty on his success. On the Friday morning, too, I again breakfasted at Epsom, and, after looking over *Limasol*, a great slashing filly engaged in the Oaks, determined to play up all my winnings on her

chance, for, despite the rustiness of her coat, and certain scars which she bore as the result of some recent skin-disease, she was full of muscle, besides being bred and built to stay. On entering the Ring, before the principal event that afternoon, I learned to my delight that the professionals were all agog to back Lord Rosebery's *Chelandry*, and were actually laying odds of five to two on her chance, while *Limasol* was friendless, or nearly so. I took £1,000 to £80, and after persuading an eager supporter of the favourite to bet me £90 to £40 on her, as a saver, I climbed to my seat on the grand stand to watch the race.

Limasol, jumping off in front, made the running down the hill to Tattenham Corner; at the road, however, *Chelandry* headed her, and I feared the game was up; but on the rising ground, after passing the Bell, Lord Hindlip's mare came again, and landed the stakes and my bets easily by a length. I had won £1,090 on the race, and at a time when I needed the money badly.

Going to Paris in the following week I further improved my bank balance through the success of that great hurdle-racer *Soliman*, and I felt as though I had stumbled upon the real Tom Tiddler's ground.

At Tattersall's, during July, I bought an old 'chaser named *Swanshot*, which, after winning the Liverpool Hurdle race as a four-year-old, had been sold at a high figure by my old friend Lindé to Captain Orr-Ewing of the 16th Lancers. Owing to cruel ill-treatment by Irish stable-lads when he was a colt, this horse had many idiosyncrasies, amongst which were a hatred of racing and a peculiar aversion to spurs, an application of which only made him sulk and drop his bit, or even run out of the course. On the other hand, he was a lazy old 'pig' who required a tremendous amount of driving with the hands, so that it was particularly difficult to get the best out of him without ruffling his temper. I discovered, however, that he actually seemed to enjoy a real rib-roaster with a cutting whip, always assuming that

he got it where he least expected it – on the opposite side to the whip-hand ! He was as clever as a monkey, and simply could not fall ; besides, he was as sound as a bell of brass. I conceived the idea that this old horse, who could an he would, had taken a dislike to the rough, prickly, thorn fences encountered on English steeplechase-courses, which scratched his belly, and that he might run more generously over the low, stiff obstacles which have to be negotiated in France ; so I began preparing him for one of the valuable prizes offered at Auteuil during the autumn.

It was on my birthday, the fifth of November, that I crossed over to Boulogne, with my 'chaser in charge of a trusty stable-lad. On the same boat was a Belgian gentleman, the owner of another racehorse in search of foreign laurels. The Belgian wore a fierce beard like a Sikh's, and was accompanied by an exceedingly handsome lady, who busied herself during the cross-channel passage in petting the two animals and flitting around like a butterfly : my simile is not inappropriate, as her bearded cavalier's racehorse was named *Chalkhill Blue*.

Arrived at Maisons Laffitte, where stabling had been engaged, I had no difficulty in hiring a lodging for the lad, and I enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing *Swanshot* eat up well after our tiring journey. Proceeding to Paris, I soon learned that my pretensions to win the big stake for which I meant to compete were being derided by the French sporting Press and the frequenters of the Chatham Bar, where sportsmen, owners, trainers, and jockeys are wont to assemble before and after each day's racing in the French capital. Taking advantage of the contempt in which my chances were held – more especially as I announced my intention of being my own jockey – I took a good bet, both to win and for a place, from a sporting American, whose expression of smug satisfaction on entering the wager in his notebook was unavailing to damp my confidence.

At last the eventful day arrived, the weather being

bright with a cold, drying wind and brilliant sunshine. Having weighed-out for the race, I was superintending the saddling of my mount and the adjustment of the weight-cloths in the paddock, when there strolled up my friend and shipmate, the owner of *Chalkhill Blue*, his handsome lady companion, and a bright-eyed little damsel, whom the English would describe as a *cocotte*, or a *demi-mondaine*, but who would be termed by a Frenchman *une petite poule*; she was *tirée à quatre épingle*s : *anglice*, dressed to kill !

‘What sort of a chance have you got?’ they enquired.

‘I think I shall win outright !’ I remarked, with a smile of confidence.

‘Bravo !’ they cried in chorus. ‘We shall bet on you, and we wish you all good luck !’

There were many English present who had seen me ride in England : the sort of creatures who haunt race-meetings, slinking around with sly, cunning looks, aspiring to be thought clever at the stupid game of finding winners ; ready to play the sycophant to any wealthy owner, fashionable trainer, or popular jockey, but usually sneering behind my back at my efforts between the flags. I need hardly say that none of these had a word of encouragement for me.

There were seven runners, and, as the distance to be covered was nearly four miles, no delay troubled us at the start, so we were soon off on our journey.

Approaching the big brook in front of the stands for the first time, I realised that two of the jockeys – I was the only amateur in the race – were trying to hem me in and force me over towards the outer wing of the jump, with a view to causing my mount to refuse ; so, taking a strong pull when within a dozen lengths of the obstacle, and holding my old ‘chaser close to the inside rails, I escaped the first danger, flying the water like a bird and finding myself nicely placed.

On drawing near to the stone wall, on the far side of the race-course, the rider on the favourite, which was galloping

close to my horse's heels, commenced shouting to me to pull out, thinking to bluff me into doing so, and feeling sure he would succeed, presuming on my inexperience.

'You can't come up inside me,' I yelled.

Nevertheless, the jockey persisted in his tactics, first pleading, then threatening; so I warned him: 'If you try to come up inside me, I shall put you over the cord!'

Determined not to give way an inch, I hugged the rails, as was my right, with one foot swinging over them, and thus we approached the jump, the favourite being compelled to take it in my tracks, his head almost touching the tail of my mount.

It was the practice at Auteuil to protect the coping of the wall with sods of turf, and these in dry weather became dusty with the chalky soil. My mount, taking off a little too closely, struck the wall with both fore and hind legs and stumbled, but recovered himself like a cat. Not so my most formidable rival, the favourite, striding immediately in my wake, for, still further blinded by the cloud of dust kicked up from the turf-sods on the coping by my horse's blunder, he galloped clean into the wall and turned head over heels: glancing backwards I caught a glimpse of my importunate friend, the bluffing jockey, rolling over and over like a shot rabbit.

Across the double post and rails we flew, around into the straight, over the big brook for the second time, and up and down the Irish bank like monkeys. Three-quarters of a mile from home, however, my old 'chaser began running in a very sour fashion and I felt in despair: he was dropping back fast; in vain I kept running my fingers up the reins to take a fresh and shorter hold on them and force him to go into his bridle; in vain I crouched forward on his neck, crooning to him and whistling into his ear to soothe and coax him. At last, when fully fifteen lengths behind the leaders, I drew my whip through with my left hand and gave the old rascal a couple of 'rib-roasters' which sounded

like pistol-shots. The effect was magical; responding to the whip he bounded forward like a deer, and, as we cleared the stream in the middle of the figure of eight, he pulled his way to the front. Edging over to the inside at the earth-bank, I gained first run at the double, the 'bullfinch,' and the final fences; at the intersection of the courses where the track widens, two horses challenged me, left and right, and stride for stride, we raced for the winning-post, my rivals glued to my girths. I can see now the scarlet of their distended nostrils, their eyes like stars starting from their sockets; can hear the crackling of the jockeys' silks in the wind made by their rush through the air, the crack of their whips; can feel the steam of the horses' hot breath! Up the straight one of the riders fouled me, so that his spur ripped open my breeches; but, heedless of all but my mad dash, I strove and pressed on for the goal, where my gallant old 'chaser landed me a winner by what the Parisians term a short neck!

As I turned to ride back to scale I heard a terrible bellowing, and naturally concluded that I was being cheered – indeed, such was my fatuous gratification at winning that I had like to have had my head come off with grinning – but I was quickly disillusioned when I heard the shrill whistling which is so ominous a sound in a French crowd, and became aware of a vast tide of humanity sweeping up the course, breaking through the barriers of the enclosures, advancing and menacing, to overwhelm me. A bottle flew past my head, then a stick; while a friendly jockey, drawing up alongside me, cautioned me: 'For God's sake, sir, don't hit at them with your whip; if you do they'll lynch you!'

Quick as lightning a platoon of red-trouserred soldiers, with fixed bayonets, doubled out on to the course and cleared a path for me through the threatening, howling mob. Even in the paddock I was menaced by individuals who bore the outward and visible sign of being decent citizens, and who shook sticks and umbrellas at me, calling me *voleur* and

escroc ! One in particular, a well-known owner of race-horses – an ex-valet who had amassed a fortune, so it was alleged, by blackmailing or robbing his master – became peculiarly offensive, screeching and gibbering like an ape, while I was unsaddling the winner preparatory to weighing-in, and hurling a foul epithet at me.

I turned round, and, looking at him in the face, retorted with the briefest, most Rabelaisian expression known in the French language – that which is called the *mot de Cambronne*.

Whereupon the people in my immediate neighbourhood commenced to shout bravo and to take my part against this vulgar alien, and, such is the fickle nature of popularity that, like a flash, the crowd turned quite sympathetic towards me.

After drinking a glass of champagne with the friendly captain of Infantry, by virtue of whose prompt action I had been able to obtain safe-conduct to the weighing enclosure, and paying *la goutte* for his men, I rapidly changed into mufti and skipped, elated, across to the telegraph-office to despatch the news of my triumph to my mother and sister in England. As I was threading my way back across the paddock, I became aware of a fresh disturbance in the crowd through which I was pressing, and, for a moment, half-expected a renewal of the riot; but this time it was a whirl of lace, silk, and fur which precipitated itself upon me; a sort of avalanche from *les maisons de confection* of the *Rue de la Paix*: it was the little, bright-eyed *poule* with her friends, and, in the background, the Sikh's beard itself !

Flinging her arms round my neck, she kissed me on both cheeks, and, with a pæan of joy, exclaimed: 'Figure to yourself. I have won 8,000 francs: I adore you and your old horse too !'

CHAPTER VI

THE GRAND NATIONAL

Angloises et Calaisiennes
—Ay-je beaucoup de lieux compris ?—
Picardes de Valenciennes ;
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

FRANÇOIS VILLON

DAME FORTUNE deserted me for many a long day after my achievement in France : the peculiarity of luck on the Turf is that it comes so unexpectedly and its duration is so ephemeral : again and again, when one is in despair and all pluck for a gamble has ebbed away, the chance comes along like a thief in the night : it is then usually too late ! Like all the goddesses which rule the fate of men, this heartless coquette is perverse to a degree : just as, in another sphere, we never find the time, the place, and the loved one together, so, on the Turf, we miss either the courage, the cash, or the courser !

Before definitely abandoning the fascinating game which has lured so many young men to ruin, I determined to have a ride in the Liverpool Grand National Steeplechase, so set to work to prepare myself and my horse for this most romantic exploit.

No race in the National Hunt calendar affords a better opportunity for the mere amateur : a contention which can be verified by referring to its records, Lord 'Hoppy' Manners, Mr. Hobson, Count Kinsky, Mr. David Campbell, and Major Wilson having been better known in the hunting field than between the flags : indeed, I believe Manners had never previously taken part in a steeplechase before riding the winner. The principal qualifications for a successful Aintree pilot are not so much skilful jockeyship as courage

and horsemanship – 'hands' – and these are more likely to be acquired in the hunting field than on the racecourse. I myself venture to hazard the opinion that the very worst sort of 'coachman' for the big Liverpool event is a second-class professional whose nerve is beginning to fail, and who, during his career, has picked up all the bad tricks of a jockey and none of the good tricks of an accomplished man to hounds.

Without claiming to the full the qualities which I have enumerated, I know that, when I rode in the Grand National a good half-dozen of the jockeys were so obviously beaten during the parade, long before the flag fell, that I would have laid odds on being able to survive, over the four and a half miles of Aintree, many a professional who might have given me seven pounds on the hurdle-racecourse at Sandown Park and a beating to boot. 'Hands,' the greatest essential to success over big fences, do not come from this way of holding the reins, or that way of playing upon the bit, but are a sort of psychic influence obtained over his mount by the rider who enjoys this priceless gift of the gods. Of course, 'hands' can be improved with practice; undoubtedly, as the seat, and especially the balance, of a rider improve, so also do his 'hands.' It is for this reason that the modern jockey's style, with very short stirrups, must be the wrong one for a steeplechase rider to adopt; because when he sits back over a fence the short stirrups must force his seat back on to the cantle of the saddle, whereas the correct position, quite obviously, having regard to the balance desirable for both horse and man, is close behind the withers. The acid test of steeplechase riding is immunity from falls: the Beasleys, Nightingalls, and Woodlands, in the old days, rarely ever fell; but modern jockeys are always coming to grief. A loose horse never tumbles; thus it must be the clumsiness of his rider which brings him down.

Swanshot was by no means an ideal horse for Aintree: he had taken part, before I bought him, in two or three races at Liverpool without having succeeded in completing the

course. He was too cautious: a Grand National winner should be a bold, fearless fencer who stands away from his jumps and has cleared thirty feet or so by the time he has landed. *Emblem* once covered thirty-six feet over the water at Aintree – not when she won, but when Walters was riding her. The famous *Cloister* used to chance his fences, yet, however hard he might hit them, he always seemed to have a spare leg with which to save himself on landing: Arthur Yates told me that it took a week to pick the thorns out of *Cloister's* legs after his great win. I once rode him at exercise and found him to be a disagreeable mount, as he had an unpleasant habit of boring on one's hands and galloping with his head right down between his knees. I believe he gave Dormer a very rough ride in the Grand National of 1892 – in *Father O'Flynn's* year; and he once nearly killed Captain Orr-Ewing, who sold him in consequence, being glad to be rid of him! One had to yield *Cloister* all the rein possible when taking a jump: he might have wrenched a modern jockey, riding with short reins, over his head! He has been treated with extravagant praise, and even described as the greatest of all Grand National winners. I believe, on the contrary, that he was vastly over-rated; according to Dick Marsh, who trained both horses for Lord Dudley, *Cloister* was at least a stone behind *Royal Meath*, the winner of the Auteuil Steeplechase. At Aintree he was beaten by *Comeaway*, who was giving him five pounds; moreover, *Comeaway* was practically running on three legs. Although *Cloister* had wonderful withers – like the hump of a camel – and perfect shoulders, he was a very plain horse in appearance, being badly ribbed up and having ragged hips and a long back; besides, he always carried a poor coat. One day I rode him out to a meet of the Whad-don Chase, he being secretly trained at that time by Mr. Charles Thompson, near Bletchley.

'What's that you're riding, Monty?' enquired a member of the hunt.

‘Only one of Charlie Thompson’s platers,’ I replied.

‘Nonsense, you don’t mean that,’ chaffed my friend. ‘Surely you must have taken him out of the shafts of the station fly!’

Cloister was standing at Tattersall’s one Sunday, as he was about to be put up for auction on the following Monday in order to liquidate a partnership. Mr. Charlie Duff, one of the owners of the horse, took a large party of ladies after luncheon to see his favourite in the stables, and many tit-bits, in the shape of carrots and apples, were carried by the fair visitors to Albert Gate. Early that morning, however, Roddy Owen and Marcus Beresford, both incorrigible jesters, unbeknown to Duff and his guests, had shifted an old carriage-horse into *Cloister*’s loose-box; how poor *Dobbin* must have wondered why so many delicacies and caresses were lavished upon him! When all the carrots and apples had been consumed, *Cloister* himself was produced; but nothing was left for the poor Grand National hero but empty kisses and chaff!

Another winner of the Grand National which I often rode was *Wild Man from Borneo*; he, indeed, was a perfect mount, fit to be a lady’s hunter, having exquisite manners and a very good mouth. To my mind, the greatest ‘chaser of all time was *Manifesto*: this peerless horse’s record at Aintree has never been approached, but his form over other courses was first class too, better perhaps than might appear on searching through the calendar, as he once belonged to an artful schemer who was always trying to hoodwink the handicapper, the public, and the bookmakers. Both *Manifesto* and *Ilex* won the rich Easter Monday steeplechase at Manchester, as well as the Grand National, so must both be classed higher than *Cloister* in comparing the merits of the equine heroes of Aintree. *Manifesto* was a beautiful model of a race-horse, and was greatly admired by the artist who painted his picture. The conditions of the Grand National Steeplechase have changed considerably in the last thirty

years: the ploughed land over which we galloped has disappeared; the approaches to the jumps have been smoothed and levelled, and the tops of the fences have been trimmed and sloped so as to make them easier; indeed, in my day, no jump on the course was under five feet six inches in height. The scale of weights, too, has been narrowed; when, after twice winning the prize, *Manifesto* carried 13 stone into third place, the bottom weight was only 9 stone 7 lbs.

However unsuitable for Aintree, *Swanshot* had, nevertheless, certain virtues: he could stay the distance, he was very sound, and he seemed to go better for me than for most jockeys, so that, in the month of January, I set to work in cheery mood to prepare myself and my horse for the great adventure. After weeks of hard training by riding, walking, and fencing, I brought myself to the condition of a prize-fighter on the eve of battle, while my old horse, the hero of the Paris race, was fit to run for his life!

On the day of the Grand National of 1898 the air was keen and frosty; a biting March wind was driving squalls of snow and hail across the Aintree meadows; inky black clouds, heavy-laden with moisture, were racing up from the horizon at intervals, obscuring for brief periods the brilliant sunshine and blue sky.

While parading for the important event, I was struck with amazement at the sight of the crowds: to my left, as I rode along the rails, was a bank of faces rising from the ground-level seemingly to the skies: humanity packed on the stands; to my right, I had a kaleidoscopic impression of blazing colours: flags, booths, and roundabouts – a veritable crazy quilt; in the centre, the course stretched away in front like a green path swept clean of fallen leaves through the midst of a forest, as though men and women had been ruthlessly brushed off the track by the besom of a giant and stacked up at the sides: little human creatures swarming like ants and buzzing with excitement.

It seemed to me as though everyone were chattering and

clamouring at once; yet, dominating all cries, came the roar of the Ring, and, now and again, some strident voice, penetrating through the pandemonium of noise, would make itself heard in articulate sounds.

After cantering over a hurdle past the enclosures, the twenty-five runners were marshalled in the order determined by the race-card, filing past the judge's box. Speaking for myself, I was nervous to a degree; I had backed my horse at fancy prices to win about £5,000, but I had not much hope of winning; I had felt, nevertheless, that it was not right to let slip even so wild a chance of recuperating my fallen fortunes at so insignificant an outlay. A friend had persuaded me to wear a pair of gloves to protect my hands against the bitter cold, but I detested riding in gloves, and so, racked with indecision, I kept taking them off, then putting them on again, only to fling them away at the last minute. A tipsy old woman yelled to me from the crowd: 'Come and 'ave a drop of whiskey, dearie; you look as though you wanted it!'

Before being hoisted into the saddle, I had received words of encouragement and the good wishes of friends in the paddock: Mr. John Porter, the trainer of many a Derby winner, and several of the leading flat-race jockeys: Fred Webb, who himself had once taken a mount in the Grand National, giving me a valuable hint or two, while Sam Loates chaffingly remarked that, speaking for himself, not for a million sterling would he ride over the one big obstacle in front of the stands, known as the 'chair' fence, let alone the rest of the course!

Charlie Cunningham, too, who, despite his long legs, had once finished second – on *Why Not* – had bet me a 'fiver' that I would not clear the first fence in the first half-dozen, and a 'pony' that I would not survive as far as the water. Mrs. Langtry had called to me: 'Have you made your will?' to which I had replied: 'Yes, and all's for you!'

In the early morning I had walked the course with a rich

financier who had never been to Aintree before, and was more frightened of balance-sheets than Becher's Brook: to me the great thorn hedges looked more formidable than ever; but, when I enquired of my companion what he thought of the course, he answered: 'Don't laugh at me, but I am rather disappointed: I thought they jumped the canal!'

As we drew up in line, like a squadron of Cavalry, behind the starter, I found myself near the rails; I can remember glancing to the northward and observing a great pall of inky black clouds tearing up the sky menacingly; just at that instant the flag fell, and, instinctively pressing my knees into my horse's sides, I was off on my long journey. I was so far ahead of the field in the first few strides that I had to bend over my old 'chaser's neck and squint under my arm to see whether the flag had really fallen. Satisfied of this, I pegged along towards the first jump into the country, the field racing along as though we had only a mile to go; the roar from the stands growing fainter and fainter, until it became a murmur.

Notwithstanding my fine start, I was seventh or eighth to fly the first fence, where one horse came down, but my mount sailed over like a bird!

The leaps now came thick and fast; a high-spirited Irish youth, named Hogan, was making the running on a quick-fencer, and I can remember his singing out: 'Now, lads, say your prayers; the next is Becher's Brook!'

On we galloped: I had a fine place on the rails – so close, in fact, that once, in landing over a jump, my horse's hoof struck the tripod-leg of a cinematograph camera which was protruding a foot on to the course, smashing it like match-wood. It was the first time that moving photographs of the Grand National had been attempted; unfortunately, owing to the snowstorm, no pictures were secured.

On my right was the *Soarer*, a clever old horse which had already won the blue ribbon of steeplechasing; he was

ridden, too, by the peerless Arthur Nightingall, the successful rider of two previous winners.

By this time the snow was falling heavily, great flakes whirling round and blinding us, preventing us from seeing far ahead: the huge blackthorn hedges loomed enormous through it, terrifying to horse and rider as we raced up to them.

Across the plough-fields we thundered: sods of brown earth, flung back by the heels of the leading horses, hurtling past my head; on towards the canal turn, where all the field seemed to swing across me, though my mount, nipping into the corner like a kitten, was over the 'Pond' fence and heading for Valentine's Brook in three strides! This is where the ground falls away on the far side of the little stream, and here my mount pecked badly, his muzzle becoming plastered with mud and snow; this seemed to disconcert *Swanshot*, and it became hard to persuade him to catch hold of his bit; thus I found myself galloping in the track of the majority of the runners. The casualties had not been as numerous as is usual, and, landing on to the race-course, all but two of the original starters were standing up. On veering to the left towards the enclosures, the murmur of the crowds again made itself heard, becoming louder and louder, growing in volume to develop into a roar as we rapidly approached the stands, until the cheers of the people, shrill and strident, lashed my face like a whip! At the 'chair' fence, while I was in the air, one of the favourites, *Barcalwhey*, rolled across my path, my horse's hoofs seeming to land right in the fallen jockey's upturned face: I caught a fleeting glimpse of his expression of terror, and, instinctively, I leaned forward, gasping: 'Oh !'

But on we were whirled ruthlessly in our Mænad's dance, each horse striving and battling for victory !

The glory of his nostrils is terror.

He breaketh up the earth with his hoof.

At the water in front of the stands the winner of a previous year fell, and slid for yards in front of me; this still further balked me, and, past the paddock, I turned to go into the country for the second time almost at the tail of the field. Shaping our course to the north-east for the second time, we again met the squall in our faces, and my mount galloped into the snowstorm like a frightened hare, his ears laid flat against his head. Crouching over his neck, I chirruped to him and tried to give him confidence; and, again and again, by slipping my fingers up the reins, sought to coax him into taking a fresh hold of his bit. Beyond Becher's Brook there were some tremendous gaps in the thorn hedges, broken by disasters during the first circuit of the course, and these favoured us, *Swanshot* seeming to gain renewed courage to make up lee-way through the plough as far as the canal; or perhaps it was the others which came back to us, as we still had more fight in us than the majority of the survivors, several of which, stone-cold, were flinging themselves across the tops of the fences, rather than flying them, and wriggling down on to the far side. Many who had already come to grief gave us a cheer, as, limping or jog-trotting, they passed us on their way back to the paddock.

Three of the runners now drew right away from me: one, ridden by a young military officer, seemed to be dominating his rivals, but his rider was more exhausted than his mount, and, at every jump, was clutching at anything to retain his seat: I could see daylight between him and the saddle every time his horse landed. Throughout the race, however, none of the runners had fenced as well as *Drogheda*; I was amazed to observe the lengths he gained at every leap, flying over and bounding away on the farther side from the rest of us like a cricket-ball! Coming from the country on to the racecourse for the last time, he tackled *Cathal* and *Gauntlet* and strode past them to win comfortably. No one could have backed *Drogheda* to win on his looks, as he was parched in his coat and had trained very light; he was a delicate horse

and suffered from his kidneys. Nevertheless he won on his merits, as the Grand National is essentially a test of jumping, and a finer fencer never won the race !

In the meantime, *Swanshot* was running more and more sulkily. In vain I threatened him with the whip ; he would not run up to his bridle ; I was lying fifth, but my horse, for all his sour temper, had more resources left in him than *Ford of Fyne*, just ahead of me, and I was on the point of singing out to Fred Withington, to announce with some jubilation that I had him beaten anyhow, when, thrusting out his toes, *Swanshot* refused the last 'open ditch,' sliding and stumbling, to be brought up short by the guard-rail ; and, for me, the race was over. Threading my way back through the throngs of people towards the enclosures, I arrived in the paddock too late for the roaring and the wreaths, but in time to drink the winner's health in a bumper of *Veuve Cliquot*.

My last chance of reviving my fortunes on the English Turf was extinguished by my failure to win the Grand National Steeplechase, and I realised how foolish I had been to bring *Swanshot* back from France, where the courses and fences were better suited to his idiosyncrasies and where he had won for himself considerable value as a racer, to England, where his repeated failures had earned him a sinister reputation. In France, too, there were more opportunities for race-riding, several prizes being offered exclusively for competition by gentlemen-jockeys ; whereas in England such events were by no means popular. Indeed, the racing public has a commercial soul which cannot appreciate the sporting spirit of a young amateur who rides his 'chasers for the love of the game, and who would far rather be beaten on his own horse in the Grand National than see a paid professional win for him. Those decadent creatures who haunt the racecourses, spending their lives and resources in searching for winners, are not disposed to favour gentlemen-riders, because such are not deemed to be satisfactory

mediums for their gambling. The sporting Press, too, in my day, was particularly critical, not to say spiteful, towards us, continually flattering the professionals and comparing our poor efforts with theirs. The old-time jockeys, howbeit, were by no means paragons.

A racing valet, who bore the honoured name of Thomas Atkins, used to look after my saddles, weight-cloths, and other gear while I was riding in England; in a former generation he had attended upon the great Fred Archer. One day, I remember, in the gentlemen-riders' dressing-room, the conversation turned upon famous races of the past, and someone declared that the finest race ever ridden by Archer was *Melton's Derby*.

'I beg your pardon, sir !' chimed in Thomas Atkins. 'Mr. Archer always used to say he rode a bad race that day, because he hit *Melton* twice when he was doing his best.'

Personally, I venture to doubt whether races have ever been won by the use of the whip : I believe that any winner would have won quite as easily if, instead of being flogged, the horse had been merely ridden home with the hands. I am sure that the use of spurs can only shorten a horse's stride, so that they are worse than useless at the end of a race; but, during a steeplechase, they may sometimes be of service when riding at a fence. Arthur Nightingall always hated them, and no one could have been a better judge than he.

On the whole, my racing experiences have led me to the conclusion that it is a solecism to dignify horse-racing with the title of sport, it being simply a vehicle, or occasion, for betting; or an opportunity for the vulgar rich to display their wealth and court popularity with the crowd: the big prices paid for thoroughbred stock are due solely to snobbishness, the bidders desiring to show off their riches !

Horse-racing might, indeed, be termed sporting if the richest prize offered were a fifty-guinea cup, if owners were encouraged to ride their horses, and if gambling upon it,

which is the cause of so much misery, degradation, and crime, and which is a canker eating into the industry of England, were to be suppressed. It must be admitted, nevertheless, that to stamp out betting would be to bring racing, as at present constituted, to an end, and thereby many an honest man might be thrown out of employment. Another aspect worthy of consideration is the diversion from political preoccupation which starting-price betting creates in the minds of the populace: if the people were not so busy seeking, day after day, the solutions of problems which puzzle them between 1 o'clock and 5 p.m. and are anticipated and discussed at all other hours, to the exclusion of other business, they might be prone to discern, in the vagaries and eccentricities of politicians, or in the fickle moods of the proletariat, the true cause of the lamentable waste of thousands of valuable English lives and of millions of valuable English money: briefly, gambling on horse-races is welcomed by even the puritanical members of Parliament as a safeguard against revolution.

I had renewed my racing experiences in France during the Nice meeting of 1898, where I rode *Coconas* in the big hurdle race. While waiting for the signal to climb into the saddle, a very beautiful woman came and patted *Coconas* on the neck, asking his name and altogether evincing so much interest in me, or my mount, that I was betrayed into what the English call a *faux pas* and the French a *gaffe* ! The lady was so jolly and familiar in her manner that I asked her if we might not meet again in the rooms at Monte Carlo: whereupon she roared with laughter and requested a mutual friend to reveal her identity to me: she was the Crown Princess of Roumania !

I received so much encouragement from owners and trainers that I decided to establish myself in Paris for the remainder of my riding career. I settled down in a flat at the corner of the Rue des Capucines and the Boulevard, hiring at the same time a bedroom near Chantilly, so as to

be near the training-grounds, in order to ride exercise on three or four mornings a week.

At the very outset I was fortunate, for, riding *Troubadour* for Stern, the father of the distinguished jockey, George Stern, I won a rich stake at Enghien; moreover, as the odds of twenty-five to one were laid against my mount, I was able to stiffen my sinews of war !

My Belgian friend, the owner of *Chalkhill Blue*, who had introduced himself to me through the medium of *Swanshot*, made occasional appearances at the races in Paris, and seemed to have taken quite a fancy to me. One night he contrived to penetrate into my flat in the Rue des Capucines and arouse me during the small hours. I sat up, dazed and startled, to see his flushed face, with Sikh's beard, grinning at me over the foot of the bedstead. 'Get up quickly !' he cried in broken English, 'come with me; I have a seat for you in the Place de la Roquette; in two hours they are going to cut the neck of Pranzini' – and here he made a slicing motion with his hand across his throat, at the same time clicking his tongue. 'We go together, *hein*, and see the fun ?'

He was deeply chagrined when I flatly refused to avail myself of his invitation which he had secured with much trouble and expense, and expressed my horror at the idea of witnessing the death of a fellow-creature under the guillotine.

Chalkhill Blue was not the only race-horse owned by this Belgian, and he was eternally propounding artful schemes whereby he might circumvent the bookies; so, quite candidly I admit that I feared the man, and always refused to ride for him; indeed, I was put to all sorts of devices to excuse myself from being his jockey. Years afterwards, I ran across this strange character in South America: he was then clean-shaven, his magnificent Sikh's beard having been swept away; nor was he accompanied, alas ! by any beautiful member of the fair sex, but he was as optimistic as

ever, earning his living at the time as a 'drummer,' travelling in hair-oil !

During 1898 I met a noble old gentleman, Sheurer Kestner, the President of the Senate, who gave his influential political support to Zola and Colonel Picquart in their endeavours to bring about the revision of the trial of Dreyfus for treason in selling valuable military documents to Germany. I had myself been a spectator amongst the crowd which watched the unfortunate Artillery captain being publicly degraded at the *École Militaire* in January 1895, and I always took an immense interest in the affair. I must admit that Alfred Dreyfus's demeanour made a very bad impression upon me, and such was the case with everyone who endeavoured, from an independent standpoint, to espouse his cause.

Undoubtedly Alfred Dreyfus was a most unattractive man to his brother officers—the sort who might have been hounded out of any English regiment in the old days by the brutal and cruel method of ragging—and these brother officers wanted to get rid of him. Besides, he was a Jew, and Jews were not popular in the eyes of many influential officers who had received their education at Benedictine or Jesuit colleges.

But there cannot be any doubt that Alfred Dreyfus was a loyal—if unpopular—French officer who had no intention whatever of betraying his country, who was illegally tried and unjustly condemned by both the courts martial before which he appeared. Moreover, what is still more shameful, purely through spite, he was treated with unnecessarily savage cruelty when a prisoner on Devil's Island. Unfortunately, a gang of unsavoury characters, who longed to do France as much injury as possible, from the very outset of the agitation ranged themselves on the side of Dreyfus, and this alienated the sympathy of many of his brother officers, who were shocked at the cruelty and injustice towards this unfortunate Jew. As Colonel Carence, a brother officer of

Dreyfus's, told me years afterwards when I was attached to the *Inspection Générale d'Artillerie*, during the armistice in April 1919: 'We simply dared not side with the unhappy Dreyfus, because siding with him meant being openly patronised, praised, and befriended by notorious rogues who were notorious enemies of France.'

The sight of this execrated Jew being reviled and insulted as he passed through the terrible ordeal of degradation in 1895 made an awful impression upon me; indeed, I could not shake off the feeling of melancholy which depressed me for many days. On my way back from Auteuil races one Sunday, three years later, I saw Esterhazy assault Picquart in the Avenue Henri Martin; but, much to my delight, it was Esterhazy who received the thrashing. In this unjust world it is not always the most virtuous who is the most muscular!

I had a fair amount of luck riding in Paris, but I suffered a grave disappointment on being beaten in the Prix de France. I had promised to ride *Feuillage* for Monsieur Tissot, but begged him to excuse me from my engagement, in order that I might take the mount on Comte Boni de Castellane's *Ermeric*, which I fancied tremendously. As it happened, *Feuillage*, ridden by a French officer, took the race; but I should have won: I was tied down with orders which hampered me, as I was told never to be in front until after I had cleared the last fence. Had I been a really good jockey, I should have realised, while riding, that such instructions were impossible of fulfilment on a free-going horse which kept pulling his way to the front. On sleepless nights I lie awake and, even though thirty-seven years have slipped away since then, my mortification is as poignant as on that July Sunday in 1898, when I was beaten by *Feuillage* at Auteuil.

I had, myself, a narrow escape from death, or at least a bad fall, at Compiègne races that summer, having consented

to ride a 'chaser for an owner of whom I knew very little. Fortunately, I missed the train from Paris, arriving at the course just in time to see the runners canter down to the starting-post. At the first fence, *Port Said*, which I was to have ridden, came a terrific cropper, and both the jockey and his mount were killed. It came to light, at an enquiry held by the stewards, that the horse was blind !

The dancing stars of the *Jardin de Paris* and the night haunts of Montmartre in those days were *Grille d'Egout*, *Rayon d'Or*, and *La Goulue*, graceful exponents of the *can-can* and expert high kickers; all three were attractively ugly, and jolly, good-natured girls. I must have been popular with them, for whenever I appeared in the saddle on a race-course where they were present, they used to greet me with the cheery yell: '*Bravo, La Cerise !*' -- Montmorency being a place famous for its cherries.

Now, in my salad days I cherished an intense, if unreasonable, antipathy to the City gents who came to Paris most week-ends from London, frequenting the *Moulin Rouge* on Sunday nights, all resplendent in evening clothes and shiny silk hats, so I used to bribe *La Goulue* -- my particular friend -- to kick off the topper of any smug gentleman from the purlieu of Throgmorton Street who might have trespassed naively within the sacred circle of her quadrilles; on these occasions, with skilful co-operation, either *Rayon d'Or* or *Grille d'Egout* would dance up behind her colleague and, in timely fashion, execute *le grand écart* (*anglice* the splits), squatting down adroitly and heavily on the top-hat as it rolled upon the ground. The victim, whose uncovered head -- usually well-pomaded -- was greeted by the cosmopolitan audience with jeers and laughter, never ventured to seek redress.

A year or two previous to the events which I have been describing, I was having supper one night in Paris with some

friends at Voisin's. A tall, handsome woman of distinguished appearance was one of the party: she was about thirty-five years of age, and was evidently on terms of familiarity with all the frequenters of the restaurant, both male and female, and I gathered the impression, too, that she was far from unpopular. At first she treated me with scant attention; indeed, she ignored my very existence. But her demeanour changed when a young man of the company began to air his grievances against his parents, who had decreed that he must leave Paris. He was furious at the strict discipline to which he was compelled to submit.

'After all,' he grumbled, amidst the applause of his friends, 'I never asked to be born!'

'I beg your pardon,' I chimed in; 'nothing so untrue has ever been said! All of us here, as unborn souls, forced our fathers to beget us and our mothers to bear us; often, indeed, to their bitter sorrow and misfortune: too frequently, alas! parents are the reluctant victims. I believe that the life-force is for ever compelling living agents to give form and shape to it, as beasts, birds, or fishes. I believe the potential is eternally striving to become the kinetic. I believe that to be the greatest of the truths which lurk behind the veil!'

My remarks created an awkward silence, and the woman who had so profoundly interested me turned to me and enquired: 'Where did you pick up your ideas?'

'I don't quite know,' I replied. 'I dare not claim to have thought them out myself; because I have been told that Schopenhauer - though I have never read him - taught them. Now Schopenhauer, I believe, founded his philosophy on that of Kant: and Kant and Spinoza are the two supreme teachers for me.'

'But your Spinoza, your Kant and Schopenhauer: how can they have known anything of men?' she retorted. 'They lived aloof from the world; the only way to study men is to mix in the whirl of society!'

'Men, perhaps,' I affirmed, 'but not man: his soul, his universe, and his God !'

She smiled, and begged me to come and sit beside her. I did so, and, heedless of the flight of time, we became absorbed in one another's conversation, until reminded of the indecency of the hour by a sleepy, reproachful waiter, who called our attention to the deserted supper-tables and the dawn struggling to penetrate the atmosphere of stale tobacco smoke.

She begged me to call upon her at her house in the Rue Lord Byron; she told me her name was Marie Lacroix, and eventually we became fast friends. From the first, it had puzzled me where to place her in the social gamut of the Bohemian world; she did not seem to me to be of the *grand monde*, or of the *demi-monde*; she was neither a wife nor a mistress, for neither husband nor lover was ever *en évidence*, nor was she a *cocotte*; nevertheless, her establishment was maintained in lavish, not to say princely, style; while outside her door there was a constant queue of carriages.

She seemed attracted to me, or to my conversation; but we met purely *en camarades*, she never invited me to meet the swarms of visitors who frequented her *salon*; whenever I called on her, I was invariably shown into her private boudoir. She gave me an occasional hint not to be seen talking to her in public; but we often dined together in the private rooms of restaurants.

Some months elapsed before I discovered her secret: it was she herself who confessed it to me one evening after dinner at Paillard's.

'I am going to tell you my story,' she blurted out, 'because I prefer that you should hear it from me than from others.'

Leaning her elbows on the table and resting her cheek upon her hand, she began: 'I was originally the wife of a man I disliked, and so, for distraction and perhaps out of spite, I took many lovers; at last I was detected and divorced.

A few years after the dissolution of my marriage I met a young man whom I loved, as I have never loved before or since; we wished to marry, but his family strongly disapproved of the match, and so we eloped and went through a wedding ceremony abroad. At this conjuncture, my mother-in-law designed a devilish plot whereby she could be revenged on me and have her son restored to her: a wealthy woman, and the owner of a jewellery business, she contrived to cause the disappearance of some gems, and, furthermore, to cast the suspicion on her son of having stolen them at my instigation. Lodging a complaint with the police, she succeeded in having us both arrested on Belgian soil and eventually extradited; though not until my baby was born!

'Under French law, a son cannot be arraigned for theft from his mother, the legal fiction obtaining that he has some title to all his parents' property; thus the charge against my husband was dropped, and I alone was indicted, and ultimately sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

'On my release, I was thirsting for vengeance, for, besides the shameful stigma which had been unjustly fastened upon me, my husband, a weak man, had been cajoled or coerced into acquiescing in the annulment of our marriage, and, worst of all, I had been deprived of my child. So it has come about that, in my married name, which is also the name of this woman, the mother of my child's father – a name which has become a byword for pandering in Paris – notwithstanding my fortune, for I am rich, and despite threats and offers of heavy bribes to induce me to drop my trade, I have ostentatiously adopted the most flagitious calling which it is possible for a woman to pursue.'

For five minutes we both remained silent. 'Then,' I queried, 'you must be a *maquerelle* ?'

'Yes,' she resumed, 'I am, indeed, a *maquerelle*, and the most notorious in Europe !' – and she gave me a look which was almost defiant.

I felt distressed to learn that this most charming woman was devoting herself to 'Mrs. Warren's profession,' and at first I could scarcely believe that it was true.

'Hatred is a great incentive,' I observed; 'it has aroused the genius of many a superman, but it has seldom gained a victory; love usually wins in the end! Man is an animal, and, according to my ideas, by no means always a superior animal; nevertheless, just as he may become a beast through self-indulgence, he can become divine, and has done so, but only through suffering and, above all, self-sacrifice.'

This woman seemed to me to possess a double soul, like Dr. Jekyll who was sometimes Mr. Hyde: while we were together she would discuss sublime subjects with the noblest sentiments; then, again, I have seen her, in a mad caprice, covered with costly laces, fur, and jewels, dance the *can-can* wildly at some Paphian feast. She knew by heart all the Rabelaisian ditties which are sung by the French conscripts on the march to the airs played by their buglers, and would chant them amidst the uproarious applause of young men who joined in the libidinous choruses!

While an exile in South Africa, it was from her that I received a letter of profound consolation on the death of my dearest friend: to read it was to realise that it had been composed by the noblest and most beautiful of minds. During the Boer War, I learned of Marie Lacroix's death with sorrow, and, on the particulars of her end coming to my knowledge some years later, they struck me as surpassing in horror every Greek tragedy. The circumstances being as follows:

A very wealthy man, being anxious to secure an introduction to a certain fair young student at the *Conservatoire*, and being willing to pay a large sum of money for the presentation, approached my unhappy friend, who, in the pursuit of her nefarious calling, duly effected the introduction. But a week later the miserable woman committed suicide: the young lady - studying at the *Conservatoire* under an assumed

name – whom she had procured turned out to be her own daughter !

This strange character was indirectly responsible for a certain influence upon my life, as it was she who introduced me to the woman who, for more than two years, was my constant companion, and more than all the world to me.

At the end of the racing season in Paris, my exchequer was becoming sorely depleted, and I had to make up my mind what was to be done in the future ; I was growing more and more disgusted with the Turf and its surroundings ; my companion was continually urging me to embark on some profession ; still I clung to the hope of effecting a coup, so that I might earn a respite of my sentence of separation from her.

I would have given much to have had her counsel and sympathy at an earlier hour of my career, at the time when my fortune was draining away through the Irish Chancery Court and before I had become embittered by the law's delays, and the precarious life I had been compelled to lead after coming of age, dependent on loans from attorneys or doles from my estates granted by permission of the court. How bitterly I grudged every penny frittered away now that I was in possession of happiness, yet forced to turn my back upon it from lack of means to hold it : 'how all my past came wailing in the wind' !

I soon discovered that it was hopeless to expect employment in Europe, so I was driven to seek my fortune overseas. My beloved friend was comfortably situated, so I was at any rate spared the anguish of feeling her to be dependent on my efforts. It must have been the call of the African veld, the will-o'-the-wisp which lures so many back to the Dark Continent, which influenced me in my choice of a field of enterprise ; but the more ostensible reasons for my selection were the promises of an influential South African financier, who generously offered to help me with introductions. The few remaining days before my departure seemed to slip away like lightning.

I felt heart-broken at breaking away from all that I loved in France, and I dreaded the future, for I felt so out of sympathy with the thoughts, beliefs, and aspirations of the Rhodesians I had met in England. I was buoyed up with the hope of being able some day to return to all that I was relinquishing, but that hope, alas ! was doomed to be unfulfilled. Dreams, especially love-dreams, are sweet, but life is bitter !

CHAPTER VII

SOUTH AFRICA AGAIN

True hope is swift and flies with swallow's wings,
Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings !

Richard III, Act V, scene ii.

ON setting sail from Southampton for the Cape on a summer afternoon in 1898 aboard the *Dunottar Castle*, it came into my mind that I had possibly made a mistake in deciding to seek my fortune in South Africa. I inherently detest Imperialism; it revolts me to watch the super-civilised, degenerate white man imposing his beer, his Bible, and his seven deadly virtues upon the vigorous, unsophisticated aborigines of the distant lands which he has wantonly seized. While I believe that on the whole the British have been more humane than others in their conquests of the savage races throughout their far-flung empire, yet I feel that it might have been better to have left the barbarians to develop by themselves, to evolve out of their simple savagery something superior to the state of civilisation which exists in Western Europe and in the United States of America: the culture which has lavished all the wealth and luxury, with its concomitant vulgarity, upon a small, narrow class, and produces and multiplies swarms of decadent types to cumber God's diligent creation for a while; the civilisation in which in my day I have discerned little save the apotheosis of the mummer, the prize-fighter, and the jockey !

Events, too, since my brief sojourn at the Cape in 1889, had moved in a manner which provoked my hostility to the diamond and gold-mining adventurers who had migrated to South Africa in search of wealth. I resented the way in

which the aliens amongst them used to brandish the Union Jack. Their conquest of Matabeleland seemed to me to have been mere piracy; Matabeles and Mashonas had been massacred in thousands in order that Cecil Rhodes might find some rich Eldorado to gratify the cupidity of his greedy followers and to feed his own insatiable ambition. Briefly, I embarked for the Cape holding the political opinions of a Liberal Little Englander !

The Jameson Raid, too, had disgusted me, and I felt repelled by all those who had taken part in it; nevertheless, when afterwards I grew to be on terms of the very greatest friendship with many of the raiders, I learnt to sympathise with their conduct on hearing their version of what was in those days an inexplicable mystery: I say 'in those days' advisedly, because, of course, to-day the secret of the Jameson Raid is a *secret de Polichinelle* ! Indeed, I must fain confess that had I myself been in Rhodesia at the time, and had I been invited to join the filibusters, I might have found it very difficult, had they appealed to my love of adventure, to refuse to throw in my lot with that cheery, lovable buccaneer, Colonel the Hon. Harry White, and his jolly companions.

On board the *Dunottar Castle* there were many charming and interesting passengers, and I made some lifelong friends: one in particular, the aged daughter of Livingstone, the greatest of all the African explorers, engaged in many conversations with me; she had much influence on the opinions I had formed, and succeeded in modifying the somewhat warped perspective in which I had judged British South African Imperialism from the armchair of my club; moreover, she strengthened my determination to approach the difficulties fermenting in Rhodesia with an open mind.

On our arrival in Table Bay, one of my fellow-passengers eloped with the *soi-disant* wife of another, and so our excitement was fluttered for some hours, the putative husband rushing theatrically about the quays, brandishing a pistol

and indulging in rodomontade while seeking the betrayer of his honour, but the scandal simmered down when facts came to light to prove that the frail lady was not really a wife, but 'a little less than kin and more than kind.'

On my arrival at the Cape in August 1898, I stayed for a couple of days with Dr. Rutherford-Harris, *l'âme damnée* of the founder of Rhodesia; from him I learned that Mr. Cecil Rhodes was sulking in his tent, giving way to bouts of intemperance, chewing the cud of disappointment and furious with Jameson and the world in general because of the frustration of his vast, ambitious schemes. Whilst riding near Groote Schuur one morning, during my visit, Rhodes galloped across the rifle-range, contemptuous of regulations and danger-signals, cursing and insulting an officer of the 60th Rifles on duty who vainly endeavoured to stop him to warn him of his peril from flying bullets; this naturally gave great offence to the military authorities.

Dr. Jameson also was sojourning in the pleasant suburbs of Capetown in order to recuperate from the mental depression which he had suffered during his recent imprisonment, to which he had been sentenced for his raid. And he, too, was moody, stubbornly refusing all offers of appeasement from Rhodes, contending that he and his followers had been made the victims of the perfidious plotters of the Reform Committee in Johannesburg.

After a week in Capetown I started for Rhodesia; the railway journey to Bulawayo was most tedious. At Kimberley I broke the journey for twenty-four hours in the hope of running across some of my old friends, but, alas! the lapse of ten years, the consolidation of the diamond mines, and the successful rivalry of Johannesburg, the Gold-reef City, had caused them to disappear and had had a sobering effect on the Diamond City, which gave me the impression, on my second visit, of being a deserted village compared with the humming, joyous community it had been in the 'eighties. Nevertheless, the hospitality of the club was extended to me

by the same cheery secretary, Tim Tyson, who, much to my astonishment, remembered me perfectly.

The railway to Buluwayo had been opened in November 1897, and it took four days and four nights to complete the journey from Capetown in those days, and the further north the train travelled the rougher became the track, the permanent way being unballasted and, except over the more important rivers and dongas, the bridges unfinished: so that the spruits, as the smaller water-courses are termed in South Africa, had to be crossed by the engine diving slant-wise down into the drift, or ford, and then proceeding to haul the cars up the opposite bank one by one, side-tracking each car, as it gained the summit, into a dead-end in order to tackle the next one in turn.

Wearisome as was the railway journey, it was luxury compared with the coach-travelling of earlier times, when ten days and nights were required to drive from Mafeking to Buluwayo: the torture of a ride in a mule-coach through the glare and dust of the African veld could only be adequately described by a Dante!

In the neighbourhood of Kimberley the veld is a barren plain, where nothing grows in the dry season, but which yields a rich pasturage for sheep after the rains; further north, in Bechuanaland and Rhodesia, is the bush-veld, so called on account of the abundant growth of mimosa thorn-bushes, which in places present an impenetrable barrier to the pioneer-trekker; there are few trees of any size, but such timber as grows makes excellent fuel.

When from time to time our train pulled up for its stock of firewood to be replenished, the passengers, glad of the relaxation from sitting cramped in the compartments, lent willing hands for tossing logs into the tender. Now and again some snake, which had taken refuge in the faggots piled at intervals along the line, would make its unwelcome appearance, and then, with shrieks and yells of excitement, passengers, guard, and engine-driver, heedless of all else,

joined in the hunt, all agog to scotch the reptile; in this fashion full many a poor, harmless grass-snake has afforded the material for a yarn calculated to freeze young blood and harrow up the soul, to be despatched home in the weekly mail-bag and read in due course with bated breath by some quiet hearth in Old England.

Through Bechuanaland, the railway skirted what was then the frontier of the Transvaal Republic as far north as Gaberones.

At Mochudi my compartment was boarded by a well-built man of marked Anglo-Saxon type, with a pleasant, cheery expression and a humorous twinkle in his eye; he was dressed in a blue cotton shirt, khaki breeches, leathern gaiters, and a wide-brimmed hat, of the shape which, of late years, has become associated with the uniform of the Boy Scouts. He greeted me in friendly fashion, and we were soon chatting away like old comrades. Everyone in Rhodesia, so he explained, was on the tiptoe of expectation regarding a certain mine, the Dunraven, which was on the eve of commencing to crush its ore, and the published returns of the first output of gold from Charterland were being eagerly awaited.

My new-found friend was somewhat cynical: he was sceptical as to results.

'Our people are too sanguine,' said he; 'they think they are going to develop a second Witwatersrand, and are for ever talking of the coming boom: most of the company-managers, too, believe themselves to be Beits or Barnatos, and some are even fatuous enough to have begun spending their money in anticipation of becoming millionaires!'

At Francistown, a queer-looking character took his seat in our carriage, and we all three joined in conversation. The new-comer was a type well known in South Africa – a sort of latter-day 'Ancient Pistol,' talkative and slightly tipsy. At each stop he pressed us to come to the refreshment-room for a drink: so, with a mischievous glitter in his eye, my

earlier acquaintance began to draw him out. 'Ancient Pistol' was most voluble, and, as so often befalls the 'Pistols' of this world, his trumpeter was dead – that is perhaps why he required to wet his lips so often: he had a mighty lot of trumpeting to perform concerning his own prowess in the recently suppressed native rebellion in Rhodesia. He advanced the opinion that, if he had been in the Jameson Raid, there might have been a different tale to tell: certainly no surrender to Oom Paul. Every time he alluded to the President of the Transvaal he left us in no uncertainty as to Kruger's immunity from anæmia.

By this time we had slipped out of our train, during a delay at a siding, and were at last leaning against a buffet, taking advantage of 'Ancient Pistol's' well-worn invitation to accept refreshment. I can see him now, a shabby swashbuckler with sombrero hat, waxed moustache, a bloodshot eye, and a flushed face – such an one as Franz Hals might have loved to paint. After draining his glass to the dregs, fixing me with a hard stare, he remarked:

'That's the stuff to tickle up your liver and say how d'ye do to your soul!'

Clutching us both affectionately by the sleeves, he continued: 'Why! Old Jack Spreckley always used to cast his eye up and down the ranks of his squadron, before going out to fight the niggers, and say: "I don't see Battling Tom!" – my name's Tom,' modestly explained 'Ancient Pistol' – "and I shan't go out and fight without him,"' wound up our tipsy entertainer with a leer of pride.

'Do you know Colonel Spreckley?' enquired my earlier acquaintance, winking at me behind Battling Tom's back.

'Do I know old Jack Spreckley?' resumed our host, emphasising each syllable with a soul-curdling oath and regarding us pityingly. 'Why, bless you, he's like a brother to me!'

'Well, if that's so, you must let me pay for this lot of drinks,' quoth my cheery friend, at the same time snatching up

'Ancient Pistol's' purse and, despite his wriggles and expostulations, stuffing it down the back of his neck.

'No, no,' whined our would-be entertainer, 'I'm going to stand this round. I've heaps of money; why won't you let me pay?'

'Why won't I let you pay?' queried the other. 'I'll tell you why; because I'm like a brother to you, d'you see? I'm old Jack Spreckley myself!'

So here was I, roaring with laughter and delight at my new-found friend's merry sense of humour, already loving him, a man universally beloved, who was, nevertheless, himself the prototype of all Rhodesian pioneers, against whom my priggish prejudice had been fermenting.

Verily that French philosopher was right who wrote: '*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.*'

Through the Tati Concessions, past a spur of the Matoppos, our train carried us into Rhodesia at last, and, as we rumbled down the final slope, a hideous collection of corrugated iron roofs came into view and I realised that we were in Buluwayo.

As the site of King Lobengula's kraal, Buluwayo was selected to be the capital of Rhodesia for sentimental reasons; it has apparently no other *raison d'être*, there being neither mines nor industries in the neighbourhood, the water-supply being indifferent and the white ants invincible! Indeed, it might be hard to find a worse position for a town south of the Zambesi.

I arrived in Rhodesia soon after the country had experienced a series of crushing misfortunes: first of all, the rinderpest, which had swept away most of the big game and all the livestock; and, as Matabeleland is by tradition a famous cattle country, the ultimate wealth of which will probably be derived from the breeding and raising of bullocks, this was by far the heaviest blow to Rhodesia's prosperity; secondly, the so-called rebellion, or rising of the natives in a last desperate effort to regain their

independence, which they were encouraged to undertake on hearing news of the failure of the Jameson Raid and the humiliating surrender of the Chartered Company's police to the burghers of the Transvaal Republic.

It is also argued that the Matabele were provoked to rise by the precautionary measures adopted by the authorities to check the spread of the rinderpest, which measures involved the slaughter of the cattle belonging to natives, cattle which must have seemed to them to be untainted. There is a legend, too, of a seer who preached a holy war, quoting the prediction of an old negro prophet which foretold the anabasis of the white man, his ephemeral ascendancy, and final, rapid katabasis to the southward: on account of this prophecy, during the whole duration of the fighting, the Mangwé Pass through the Matoppos to Bechuanaland was left open. The rising of the natives was brought to an end by the shooting of M'Limo, the Matabele chief, by the American Scout Burnham, and through an *indaba*, or council of war, between Rhodes, Sauer, Colenbrander, and the Matabele chiefs.

When some Gibbon of the future writes the history of the Decline and Fall of the British Empire, he will be able to trace its former boundaries by corrugated iron, sardine and bully-beef tins, for all these hideous, inartistic, but indestructible aids to the comfort and luxury of the British are sown in profusion about the English colonies, and especially in South Africa. Wherever one turns in Buluwayo, one sees corrugated iron, which gives the town an ugly appearance.

If Buluwayo did not quite fulfil my ideal of what a pioneer-township should be, it nevertheless boasted a certain spirit of the mining camp made familiar by Bret Harte. The streets, wide enough for a team of twelve span of oxen to be able to wheel about in a circle, were thronged with a motley crowd of Colonials, Dutch-Afrianders, negroes, negresses, some with piccaninnies in their arms and a dash of bright

colour about their scanty costumes, half-castes and officials of the Chartered Company; every white man being in his shirt-sleeves, breeches, and gaiters, and every white woman wearing a sun-bonnet. Here and there, too, might be seen a constable of the B.S.A. Police making a brave show, spurs jingling and sombrero cocked, with as fine an air of a swash-buckler as any *mousquetaire* described by Dumas or painted by Meissonier ! The mule-teams in the Cape carts, as they rattled past, kicked up such an infernal cloud of yellow dust that sore eyes and thirst were prevailing tortures to be suffered.

Seated around a table in the bar-room of the hotel in the market-square on any night might be seen hardy, sunburnt miners, prospectors, and transport-riders throwing dice, playing cards, or bidding at the auction-lotteries on the local races. One night, I remember, a racing pony was raffled and put up three times for re-sale by the fortunate winners; but as, on the third drawing, the lucky number fell again for a second time to the owner of the pony himself, a fearful row broke out; amidst yells of 'Cheats !' and 'Swindlers !' stock-whips were cracked, pistols were fired at jugs, bottles, mirrors, and the inn was wrecked. I can see the swarthy-faced publican now, wringing his hands and shrieking out curses in broken English between his sobs of rage.

After playing poker, on another evening, till midnight, our party broke up to go home to our doss-houses and bungalows. Hardly had we crossed the square, flooded with bright tropical moonlight, almost as clear as day, when our progress was arrested by the most appalling screams. Hastening to the spot from which the cries had reached us, we discovered that the eternal triangle was working its spell in Rhodesia as elsewhere. A man was lying on the floor of a hut, while another was kneeling on his chest, threatening and exhorting him to keep silent. Seated on the bed hard by was the cause of the trouble – the fair, frail wife, with

dishevelled hair and dress disarranged, shrieking hysterically. It took us about an hour to compose the troubles of the three, prevent murder, and find separate lodgings for the parties concerned; and then, after the inevitable drinks which had to be shared, first with the snivelling cuckold, then with the prospective co-respondent, we departed, one and all longing for a night's rest.

Hardly had I reached King's Chambers – which was the grandiloquent name of the row of corrugated iron shanties where I had 'diggings' – when I heard the report of a gun, followed, a few minutes later, by the weeping and wailing of some negroes. Rushing out of doors in my pyjamas, I found to my horror that one of the party with whom I had been playing penny-poker had blown out his brains. It transpired that the poor fellow had received bad news from home during the day, and had planned to spend one last, jolly evening with friends before putting an end to himself.

One night I got into trouble with the police for riding my bicycle without a light; the constable treating me with undue roughness, I struck him, and, catching him unbalanced, knocked him down; the fellow, however, courageously clung to my bicycle and blew his whistle, so in a trice I was surrounded and borne off to the police-cells. When I gave my name to the inspector, he refused to believe there was such a name, jeering and mocking at me! By an extraordinary coincidence, the *Graphic* arrived from England for the inspector, while, seated on a bench, I was awaiting the decision of a justice of the peace to grant me bail. Now, in this number of the *Graphic* was a picture of my cousin, Captain Reymond de Montmorency, winning the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Omdurman. The demeanour of the inspector changed towards me directly he saw this illustration.

On the following day, before the magistrate, I pleaded guilty, apologised, and was fined five pounds.

Although, ensconced in an armchair on the stoep, or veranda, of the Buluwayo Club, one might have thought oneself in the centre of a peaceful, luxurious civilisation, one occasionally received a reminder that the wild life of the veld, or jungle, was near at hand. I can recall, on a hot afternoon, after lunch, being seated on the stoep, reading through a pile of newspapers from home, when from the street I heard a voice calling out: 'I say, Colenbrander, a lion is after Savile's donkeys on the Metsimasuaana farm, will you come and try to bag him?'

'Rather!' - answered Colenbrander's voice from the club - 'I'll come along in my Cape-cart.'

It seemed to me that I had only been an hour or so working my way through the journals - I was still seated on the stoep, and I had just ordered tea - when I heard the same voice from the street speaking again:

'I say, you chaps, have you heard? That lion got Colenbrander.¹ He wounded the beast and then, like a fool, followed him up through the long grass and got mauled; he's dead!'

A few days after arriving in Buluwayo I was appointed secretary and manager of the Turf Club, remaining in that situation for about six months, during which period I rode constantly at the races, having considerable success. I found riding between the flags in Rhodesia a very different game from measuring my powers as a jockey against Nightingalls and Woodlands; thus I won many triumphs, one afternoon being on the backs of no less than five winners.

There was a charming chestnut pony, named *Robert*, on which I was never beaten; indeed, I won nine races on him. He was nervous, and hated whip or spur, but I used to pet him as he galloped and, crouching forward over his neck, to whisper in his ear, so he always came right away

¹ This was a brother of the famous Johann Colenbrander.

with me at the finish. None of the other local jockeys ever won on him: they might have deemed themselves humiliated if their whips or spurs had been taken from them, like chanticleer deprived of his coxcomb; so, of course, *Robert* would put back his ears and refuse to do anything for them.

Feeling that the only chance of making a fortune was to find my way into the mining industry, I approached a racing friend, Gordon Forbes – himself no mean performer in the pig-skin – and he, being the manager of the Anterior mine, very generously gave me an opening: it was agreed that I was to go to the Anterior mine, and, working for three months as an unpaid apprentice, learn the trade of an amalgamator.

Thus, on a beautiful autumn morning in April, I started off at sunrise on my first journey in one of Zeederberg's coaches. There were no roads across the veld, but the mules picked their way through boulders and thorn-bushes along a sandy track marked by the wheel-ruts of many ox-wagons which had passed that way; the coach, rolling and pitching like a boat in a heavy sea, crawled forward at less than six miles an hour, enveloped in a cloud of yellow dust kicked up by the trampling hoofs of our team, which was ceaselessly encouraged by the queer, angry yells of our half-caste driver, or urged to its task by cracks of his stock-whip resounding like pistol-shots.

After many hours, an outspan, or posting-house, was reached, where, while our mules were being changed, a meal was served; the accursed jolting of the vehicle and the inhalation of pecks of foul dust had turned me so sick, however, that I was unable to face the joint of meat which formed the day's fare.

It is related of a well-known Jew financier that, finding pork to be the only dish available at the store where he had been compelled to outspan, he stifled the whisperings of his conscience and partook somewhat freely of the 'unclean'

food. During the afternoon, while proceeding on his journey, a terrific thunderstorm overtook his Cape-cart, whereupon the Jew, shuddering and glancing skyward, muttered: 'What a fuss to make about a little bit of pork !'

I remained for four months at the Anterior mine and mastered the principles of what I then thought was to be my future profession.

One Sunday, having a day off duty, I rode my bicycle across the veld to the Blanket mine, where I spent the middle of the day with a friend; towards evening, I returned on my bicycle, arriving at the store by the drift near our mine, where I lingered to have some supper. About half an hour later, a transport-rider, strolling in, demanded a whiskey with Eno's fruit-salt, which strange mixture was a favourite drink with the miners.

'Who has been riding a bicycle from the Blanket mine?' he enquired.

'I,' I replied.

'Do you know that a lioness and her two cubs have been tracking you for three miles? I have examined their spoor.'

Owing to the depredations of the rinderpest, while I was in Rhodesia there was little game for the lions to prey upon, and these beasts became very daring, and would penetrate right into the towns by night and carry off donkeys, of which they seemed to be very fond.

I often wonder why that lioness did not eat me: it may be that the rubber tyres of my bicycle left an unappetising scent which puzzled her, so that, hungry as she was, the beast preferred to change her quarry and seek some other donkey.

During the month of July 1899, having learnt my job, I was transferred to the Criterion mine, nearer Buluwayo, and commenced to work like a real professor, my wages being £1 a day, *skoff* (food) being found for me. Eatables in South Africa are called *skoff* (a Zulu word) – presumably because it is a mockery to describe such stuff as food !

The work was hard, very hard. Indeed, for a month I did twelve-hour shifts each day. I was often so exhausted on coming off duty that I would throw myself down on my bunk, without taking the trouble to wash the grime from my face and hands, to sleep like a dead man.

The two most beautiful qualities of Rhodesia are its climate and the hospitality of its settlers, both being as sparkling and delicious as champagne. Soon after my arrival in Rhodesia I was invited to dine at the mess of the early pioneers who lived together in a bungalow known as the 'Doss House,' which was guarded by a tame python, whose duties consisted of frightening away thieves and keeping down the rats, which he did more effectively than any grimalkin ! Around the friendly board were seated many of the leading characters in Matabeleland, some Jameson Raiders, and a couple of big-wigs in the mining industry. The conversation eventually turned on the Jameson Raid, and, as I had always been curious to learn the truth about it, I was all ears !

A certain American mining expert, who despite his blunt manner was a *persona grata* amongst the Afrikanders, began to chaff some of the Raiders, and eventually succeeded in nettling one of them. Turning to me, the Yankee enquired : 'Now, sir, you've been an officer. Wouldn't you have thought, if you had taken part in such a God-darned fool-expedition, that you would have been risking your commission in the Army ?'

Before I could reply, one of the party, somewhat nettled, interjected : 'Not if he had seen the telegram and letter I was shown, and been given the assurances I was given !'

'Anyway,' persisted the irrepressible banterer, 'why did your military leader, Sir John Willoughby, make such an ass of himself as a witness before the Select Committee ?'

'You, too, might have seemed to be making an ass of yourself,' retorted the Jameson Raider unguardedly, 'if you

had been the only single witness who was telling the truth, while the others, by arrangement and with the idea of being loyal to a cause, were all inventing lies !

The American leaned back in his seat and, with his hands against the dining-table, pushed his chair away with a grating noise. 'My gracious !' said he, 'you Britishers make me tired ! You rake up something out of the private life of some valuable public servant, something which should "cut no ice" at all – save p'raps with his wife – and you decree that that man shall never, never hold office again, yet you revere a son of a gun who exploits your flag and intrigues with a dirty crew of alien Jew financiers ! You, sir, just now have as good as confessed that your Home Government knew all about your buccaneering exploit before you ever started to plan it ; but let me tell you, anyone with an ounce of brains might have guessed the truth without your admissions ! And, what's more, I'll tell you where your authorities "slipped a cog" !

'Two transports, spilling over with soldiers – time-expired troops – left Calcutta for England with sealed orders in the December before the Raid ; why did they call at Durban on the way ? No homeward-bound transports had ever called at Durban before. Why, it's thousands of miles out of their course ! Yet, when they sailed from India in December 1895, fully a fortnight before Dr. Jim moved out from Pitsani Pothlugo, their instructions were to call at Durban, and they arrived just in time to pick up Oom Paul's prisoners who were to be handed over to your police in London.

'Now, who gave the orders for these transports to call at Durban if it were not your Government ? Why did your Government give such orders a fortnight before any crisis had arisen at the Cape, if it were not that your War Office anticipated that the garrisons in Natal might need stiffening at about that time ?'

The guests all sat silent, their eyes turned on the Jameson Raiders.

'I'm going outside to have a smoke !' was the laconic remark of the man who had lost his temper, an ex-officer of the Guards, who had been broken on account of his participation in the Raid. And, one by one, all filed out into the tropical night, leaving the Yankee chuckling to himself.

One of the greatest surprises which I experienced on arriving at Buluwayo, where I fully expected to find that Mr. Cecil Rhodes and Dr. Jameson were regarded as little tin gods, was, on the contrary, their unpopularity; besides, many of the settlers held pretty much the same opinion as I about the Raid and Imperialism according to the Rhodesian gospel. In the days before the conquest of the Matabele – that is to say, when I was a young officer at the Cape in the 'eighties – Cecil Rhodes, impatient because they would not endorse without question his Imperial policy, used to hold English politicians in contempt, reserving the deadliest shafts of his cynicism for Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and his friends: he used to sneer at the Brummagem politician with his orchid and his eye-glass, at the anxiety of the Nonconformists for humanity towards the negroes when it was consistent with ten per cent dividends; Rhodes, in those days, flirted with the Afrikander Bond, and even threatened to cut the painter attaching the Cape to England! But a reconciliation had taken place owing to Mr. Chamberlain's sympathy and support of Rhodes's policy in the dispute which arose in 1894 between the Prime Minister of Cape Colony and Paul Kruger on the question of the drifts: the President of the Transvaal, by closing the drifts – or fords – over the river at the frontier, hoped to compel British traders to use the railway, and so force them to pay the heavy dues and customs exacted by the Boer Government. It was in 1893, or early in 1895, during one of his visits to England, that Cecil Rhodes converted Joseph Chamberlain into being his supporter, and began to teach the erstwhile Radical Little Englander to believe in the British Empire and become an out-and-out Jingo. Chamberlain, it must

be borne in mind, succeeded Lord Ripon as Colonial Secretary on the fall of Rosebery's Government in June 1895.

To grasp thoroughly the situation, it is necessary to begin our story in December 1895, just before Jameson started on the Raid from his camp on the western frontier of the Transvaal Republic at Pitsani Pothlugo, where he and his Mashonaland Mounted Police had been wearing out their hearts for weeks, awaiting the signal to march from the conspirators on the Rand and straining like greyhounds in the slips. At that time the Uitlanders, plotting to overthrow the Government of Paul Kruger and secretly arming in Johannesburg, began to squabble amongst themselves. I believe that the chief bone of contention was the Union Jack: some wishing it to be hoisted when the time was deemed ripe for the standard of revolt to be erected, others being strongly opposed to rebelling under its protection. Until agreement could be reached, it was manifestly futile – nay, harmful – for Jameson to march into the Transvaal, because the pre-arranged pretext for his intrusion was to be the danger menacing women and children during the fighting on the Rand; so throughout the month of December 1895 Colonel Frank Rhodes kept exhorting Jameson to remain quiet.

Jameson, on the other hand, felt that the longer the moment for his start was delayed, the greater was the danger of the secret leaking out; moreover, he was convinced that the news that he had jumped off would set a match to the powder; that all the differences in Johannesburg amongst the Uitlanders would immediately be composed, and that all would rally at once to the cause. But, accustomed to campaigning in Matabeleland with the pioneer columns, composed of honourable English youths, Dr. Jameson had not reckoned upon the perfidy and pusillanimity of the Reform Committee in Johannesburg, the members of which, immediately their skins were in danger, hastened to make terms with President Kruger at the very moment

when Jameson had come under fire from the Boer commandos.

The stupidity of the whole business was that only fools could have imagined that Kruger would remain for weeks and weeks ignorant of the prospective attack: of course, he knew all about it, as is proved by a speech he made at the time, in which he sagely observed: 'You must wait for the tortoise to put out his head before you can sever his neck.'

Amongst his intimate friends, Dr. Rutherford-Harris made no secret of the interviews he had had with Chamberlain and Fairfield at the Colonial Office in London during the summer and autumn of 1895; indeed, he averred that they knew as much as he did himself about the plotting in Johannesburg and Jameson's intentions. It is obviously impossible to understand why, despite the protests of Khama, the Bamangwato chief, Chamberlain should have handed over the charge of the Bechuanaland frontier to the Chartered Company if he did not approve of the whole policy.

All the officers under Jameson were given personal assurances that the Home Government were aware of the conspiracy and were prepared to countenance it and support the insurgent Uitlanders, BUT ONLY IF THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL IN OVERTHROWING KRUGER! This I know from conversations with survivors of the Jameson Raid, Colonel Harry White, Major Edward Holden, and Captain Bowden, all of whom were intimate friends of mine and who assured me that they believed that the English Colonial Office was fully cognisant that Dr. Jameson intended to invade the Transvaal to give a hand to the Uitlanders in their revolt at Johannesburg. That their belief was well founded, moreover, is proved by the peculiar fact of the sailing of the two Indian transports, with sealed orders, from Calcutta for Durban in December 1895. Officers taken prisoners in the Raid, whom President Kruger had handed over to the

High Commissioner, were actually conveyed to England in one of these troop-ships, and, during their voyage homeward bound, were put in Coventry by the regular officers on board.

Certain interesting facts came to my knowledge in 1912, at a time when I was myself a member of the United Irish League and when John Redmond had asked me to undertake the secretaryship of the league on the resignation of Miss Hoey. Some years previously, in 1888, Cecil Rhodes had presented £10,000 to Parnell for the Irish cause, and this gift had won for him a measure of support from the Nationalist Party at Westminster. Now, as soon as it became a question of the impeachment of Rhodes and Jameson by Parliament in 1896, Rhodes summoned the United Irish League to show its gratitude; thereupon one of the faithful watch-dogs of the Irish was posted on guard in the House of Commons, being briefed on behalf of Rhodes with special instructions to denounce the hated English Minister¹ who was implicated in the Jameson Raid, as soon as any attack upon Rhodes or Jameson might be launched from the Government Benches. This accounts for Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's milk-and-water speech on Cecil Rhodes's conduct, when all the world expected a denunciation of the filibusters: verily the Colonial Secretary roared as gently as any sucking dove! Moreover, such pressure was brought to bear on the English Cabinet, that Dr. Jim and his lieutenants, who were lying in gaol under sentence for making war upon a friendly State, were released after farcically short terms of imprisonment.

Of course, many unfortunate officers lost their commissions; but it is impossible to make omelettes without breaking eggs; besides they took risks with open eyes. Howbeit, at the close of the Great Boer War the opportunity

¹ The Irish at Westminster used to taunt Joseph Chamberlain and call him 'Judas' for his alleged betrayal of Parnell.

was seized of bestowing a decoration on every officer who had participated in the Raid.

The whole story of the invasion of the Transvaal by Dr. Jameson lays bare the mentality of the British colonist of those days: he was so overweeningly vain that he genuinely believed that a mere handful of his fellows were competent to fight successfully all the Dutch commandos which might be assembled for the defence of their country. Indeed, Cecil Rhodes himself throughout the whole crisis refused to believe that the burghers of the Transvaal would dare to measure their strength against that of the British and Colonial troops available at the Cape, stoutly maintaining up to the very eve of Paul Kruger's ultimatum, on the 11th of October, 1899, that the stubborn attitude of the Boers and their purchase of Krupp guns and Mauser rifles were mere bluff. Unhappily, too, he succeeded in infecting our Colonial Office with his views.

But the truth is that the Boer, for many generations, has been so toughened and welded upon the hard anvil of necessity that he has become eminently fitted to his surroundings, and in veld warfare has more veld-craft than the Englishman, or even the British colonist: he has sharper, longer eyesight and greater endurance; he is a superb shot with a rifle, has a genius for selecting the best military position for defence, and beyond all else he is more adept as a horseman: by this, I mean he can husband the strength of his horse, cover greater distance, and finish a long trek across the veld with both his mount and himself fresher than can the British Colonist put to similar tests. A commando of burghers, too, travelling with fewer encumbrances, is more mobile than a squadron of English troops, Cape Police or Colonial Volunteers. The two Boer Wars conclusively proved this, my contention; more especially the Great Boer War, in which it took 300,000 British soldiers, equipped with modern arms and trained to discipline, three years to defeat 50,000 burghers.

By the end of September 1899, however, it appeared to me that war between England and the Boer Republics was inevitable.

Before taking up my job as amalgamator at the Criterion mine in July, I had indulged in a week's holiday at Capetown, staying with the C.R.E., Colonel Morris, an old brother officer of my father's. There I met Sir William Butler, the officer commanding the troops at the Cape, and, during the temporary absence of Sir Alfred Milner in England, the acting High Commissioner for South Africa. I learnt from him that the Home Government meant to force war with Kruger, despite his warnings that the political situation was developing too fast, and was forging ahead of his military preparations. The general expressed the opinion that, having regard to the extent of the terrain and the length of all possible lines of communications, fully 70,000 troops would be required for a campaign against the Boers, whereas, during the winter of 1899, he only had about 19,000 men at his disposal.

Sir William told me, too, how agitators and journalists in Johannesburg were employing the shadiest methods and publishing the grossest lies to kindle public opinion in England against the Boers. I asked him if Milner, on his return, would not advise milder counsel, but the general feared that Milner was himself all agog for war with the Boers, and had apparently been appointed High Commissioner for the express purposes of provoking Oom Paul to fight.

Our trouble with the Boer Republics can be traced to the hasty and ill-considered annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 by Sir Theophilus Shepstone, in clear violation of the Zand River Convention of 1852, under which England pledged herself to respect the independence of the Dutch burghers. This annexation, the work of Lord Carnarvon, Disraeli's Colonial Secretary, was denounced by the Liberal Opposition and by Gladstone from the platform.

Gladstone nevertheless, on becoming Prime Minister in 1880, was likewise ill served by his Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, a garrulous mediocrity; so he weakly consented to continue the Conservative policy, and was punished, as are all flaccid, vacillating statesmen, by having to surrender to the Boers after the British defeats at Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and Majuba. If, on coming into power, Gladstone, obeying the dictates of his own heart, had restored the Transvaal to the Boers on the grounds that Sir Theophilus Shepstone's proclamation had been a violation of the Zand River Convention and dishonourable to the good name of England, he would have saved us from two wars. Our task in the Great Boer War, too, might have been rendered less difficult if Lord Carnarvon had not refused to confirm a treaty, arranged by Sir Bartle Frere in 1877 with the Portuguese, whereby England would have been empowered, in the event of war, to pass troops and munitions coming from England or India through Portuguese territory in East Africa.

It was on account of what I had learnt from Sir William Butler's lips that I returned to Buluwayo in July 1899 – the mid-winter in South Africa – convinced that war must come, and during the first week of October I resigned my situation as amalgamator on the Criterion mine.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BOER WAR

The bugles and drums give you music
And my heart, oh my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

WALT WHITMAN

IN anticipation of war, by the end of August 1899, all Matabeleland was in a ferment. Several special-service officers having arrived from England, it became known that the Government had authorised the raising of two regiments of Irregular Horse. Being esteemed for their tact and ability in the handling of scallywags, Colonels Baden-Powell and Plumer had been entrusted with the task of recruiting and organising local settlers for the defence of the Rhodesian and Bechuanaland frontiers.

Colonel Baden-Powell having decided to make his headquarters at Mafeking, little was seen of him at Buluwayo, but Colonel Plumer soon had a training camp established on the racecourse, and his corps, known as the Rhodesia Regiment, might have been seen drilling and exercising throughout the month of September.

In expectation of a sudden outbreak of hostilities, it was deemed advisable, early in October, to move these newly raised troops under Colonel Plumer nearer to the frontier of the Transvaal, with the idea of guarding the drifts – or fords – of the Limpopo, or Crocodile River. Colonel Plumer was on the march through what is known as the Gwanda district of Rhodesia when war was actually declared, so he decided to establish an advanced base of operations at Fort Tuli, some twenty miles north of the Limpopo. A two months' supply of stores had been accumulated at

Fort Tuli, but after the outbreak of hostilities, and until he marched to the railway in January 1900, Plumer was dependent for provisions and ammunition on a long line of communications maintained by ox-wagon and mule-cart through the bush-veld, from Buluwayo. The defence of so extended a line of frontier, however, was too heavy a task for a force which only consisted of five squadrons of the Rhodesia Regiment, one hundred of the British South African Police and three guns; besides, the impenetrable nature of the bush in which he was obliged to operate multiplied the dangers which threatened Colonel Plumer of being outflanked or cut off from his base of supplies, and increased his anxieties. The hardships and difficulties to be faced by the troops, moreover, were increased in no small measure by the ever-present fear of malaria and of the attacks of wild beasts – a trooper of this command was actually eaten by a lion while on sentry-duty. Howbeit, the Boers, it should be remembered, were menaced with precisely similar doubts and dangers on their bank of the Crocodile River.

By Christmas 1899, however, the whole situation had changed, owing to greater military events happening in Natal and Cape Colony. The importance of the operations on the Rhodesian frontier of the Transvaal had sunk into insignificance; the Boer commando under Grobelaar, operating on the Crocodile River, had been withdrawn for service on other fields, and Colonel Plumer, early in the New Year, was able to move his field-force to the railway to the west and concentrate upon his new objective, which was the relief of Mafeking, where Colonel Baden-Powell had been besieged since the third week in October.

From the beginning to the end of the crisis, I myself felt so little sympathy with the Uitlanders of Johannesburg and their political supporters, mostly Jews, throughout the South African colonies that I had no desire to participate in the war. In my opinion, the cause of the Dutch burghers was the just one, and I regarded the Boers as men fighting for their

hearths and homes against greedy, foreign aggressors. I accordingly left Buluwayo by train on the 7th of October, as I wished to gain Capetown with a view to securing an appointment as war-correspondent to some newspaper; but before reaching Bechuanaland it became obvious that the line would be cut and all railway communication with the south suspended for many months, perhaps for the duration of the war.

On the 11th of October, I was cooling my heels in a siding at Crocodile Pools when an armoured train, manned by men of the B.S.A. Police under Captain Llewellyn, passed through on its way to the front. My latent spirit of adventure was not proof against the enthusiasm of these gallant fellows, so, swallowing my scruples, I eagerly accepted their invitation to join them. That night, after the expiration of President Kruger's ultimatum, while inspecting a culvert blown up by the enemy, we came under fire, and within forty-eight hours I was enrolled as an officer of the Southern Rhodesia Volunteers. For three months, with our two armoured trains, we patrolled the line as far south as the Notwani River, and it was a great achievement to have avoided capture by the enemy, as during that period we were 'up in the air,' and in the gravest danger of being cut off on the railway from our advanced base.

By the 18th of January, 1900, Colonel Plumer had concentrated his forces at Gaberones, on the railway, and had upwards of a thousand men available for the firing line, with two seven-pounder mountain-guns, carried on mule-back, and a Vickers-Maxim twelve-pounder, of modern pattern, firing fixed ammunition. News having come to hand that the enemy expected reinforcements, Colonel Plumer decided to anticipate their arrival by attacking the laager at Ramutsa, from which a Krupp gun, posted on a kopje, was able to command the railway at Crocodile Pools and continually to harass our men working on the line. It was the selfsame gun-redoubt which, some three months previously,

I had volunteered to storm, with some of the B.S.A. Police, while it was in course of construction. On that occasion, within an hour of the time appointed for launching the attack, orders had reached me, by telegram, from Colonel Nicholson, commanding the base at Buluwayo, forbidding the enterprise. This gun-redoubt – greatly strengthened and fortified, however, for defence during those twelve weeks – was the position Colonel Plumer determined to attack.

First of all a night-march was planned by Plumer across the veld and through Ramutsa siding, and those officers detailed to take part in the operation were invited to ask questions at the usual preliminary pow-wow. As I knew the ground pretty thoroughly, I asked for instructions if the assaulting party failed to reach their objective before dawn, pointing out that the distance to be covered, during the dark hours of the night, was about twenty miles. My question was not answered, but I was severely snubbed by Colonel Plumer. On the night selected for the march and assault, the men lost their way within three miles of the starting-point and the whole business was a fiasco; had it been less of a fiasco indeed, had our men arrived in their confusion within striking distance of the enemy's position, our attack might have ended in a disaster.

Some ten days later, the plan was recast; on this second occasion, Major W. D. Bird, of the Queen's Regiment, was to lead 150 men of the Rhodesia Regiment and a few B.S.A. Police in a night-assault on the enemy's gun-redoubt. I was ordered to advance, in charge of a field-gun, to within a mile of the objective to cover the storming-party. Captain French, of the Royal Irish Regiment, an old Winchester boy, who had been very ill with malaria, begged to be allowed to come out of hospital in order to take part in the operation and, as Major Bird, knowing his worth, particularly desired the services of this brave young officer, he was given command of the left wing of the storm-troops, although he was still weak from fever.

A reconnaissance of the position, one dark night, by Lieutenant Harland and myself, had revealed the fact that barbed-wire entanglements covered the approaches to the laager, so some of our officers were provided with wire-clippers. Indeed, I believe this small combat at Crocodile Pools is the first in the history of war in which an assaulting-party has endeavoured to cut its way through barbed-wire obstacles.

The men filed past me at 10 p.m., through a drift of the Metsimasuaana River, and I wished them good luck. The valley was covered with boulders and mimosa-thorn growing so thickly in places that progress was impossible in extended formation, so Major Bird ordered the troopers to file along the few Kaffir trails which penetrated the bush. The moon was in her second quarter, not due to set until 1 a.m., and her pale light, which flooded the valley, afforded some help to the guides; the crest of the hill marking the enemy's position standing out darkly in profile against the sky. I lay down by our twelve-pounder, and it seemed to me that the noise of our men's tramping, the snapping of twigs and the displacement of pebbles and stones, as they pushed their way through the undergrowth, or stumbled on uneven ground, lasted for fully half an hour, and omened ill for the success of a surprise. The troops had been ordered not to fire on any account, but to crawl as close to the redoubt as possible, and then, with fixed bayonets, to make a rush for the wall; so I knew that any sound of firing must come from the Boers. My nerves were at high tension, and I grew more and more uneasy as I waited, my ears straining to catch the faintest sound. The crickets and locusts kept up a soothing chorus of chirrups throughout the night, chiming in with one another's calls like the antiphonies of a choral service.

When the moon went down, a great tide of shadow seemed to flood the valley, and the constellations shone out brilliantly. I remember watching the planet Jupiter which,

strange to say, was twinkling like a fixed star : I have never observed this phenomenon since. As the hours of the night crawled on, the stars began to turn pale with the approach of dawn ; such an age had passed since our men had trooped through the ford of the river that I began to fear that the column must have missed direction – indeed, I was dropping off to sleep when a sudden burst of rifle-fire jerked me back into wakefulness and brought me to my feet. Then came the roar of an explosion, a bright flame darting skywards near the crest of the Boers' kopje, succeeded by a continuous splutter of shots, punctuated every few seconds by the report of a field-gun, or the rhythmical clang of a pom-pom – the automatic one-pounder cannon. Then there was silence, only broken by the harsh droning of the grasshoppers, or the sound of someone moving through the bush, or stumbling over the rocks in the river-bed ; these noises alarmed us at first, as we feared they might be caused by the enemy's scouts, but we were relieved on discovering that some of our own men – shirkers or strayers – were slipping back to camp. After a lull of about ten minutes, the firing broke out afresh, in gusts, and a second roar of an explosion rent the air ; lastly, individual shots rang out from time to time, the echoes reverberating along the hills, then gradually dying away.

By this time it was daylight, and our men began to straggle back over the drift in great numbers. I realised that these were quitters who could not have pushed on with the storming-party, or they would not have arrived in the rear so soon – indeed, barely one half of the column can have gone half way ; some frankly admitting that they had lost their way in the dark, amidst the labyrinth of boulders and thorns. Meanwhile the Boers were searching the bush-veld with shrapnel, pouring in shot after shot with their quick-firing gun at a surprising rate, and the shells were shrieking over us, or bursting just above the highest of the mimosa-bushes, the shrapnel bullets ripping through the foliage, and

one of them grazing my hand. I commenced replying to the enemy's bombardment, seemingly with some success, but had not fired more than ten rounds when I received a message from Colonel Plumer ordering me to desist as the ground around the Boer redoubt was supposed to be thick with our wounded. Indeed, Trooper Martin afterwards told me that one of the burghers, at some risk to himself, bravely ran out from their fort and bore him, wounded, into a place of safety, placing him under cover from our fire, and resuming his own place on his gun.

Between 7 and 8 a.m. those who had actually been in the thick of the fight began to arrive, and, last of all, Major Bird himself. His clothes were hanging in rags, and his legs were torn and bleeding from wounds caused by thorns and barbed-wire. He told me that about forty men had succeeded in getting within striking distance of the redoubt, and that only a handful had passed right up to the Boers' gun. Misled by a false crest, when climbing the kopje, the attacking line had borne too much to the right, so that only our extreme left flank won the true summit and struck up against the fort at all. He gave me the sad news, too, that Captain French was dead, and several others. We lost on that day, nine killed, three dead of wounds, and twenty-two severely wounded. The Boers had no casualties.

For a couple of hours, wounded men continued to limp past me, and some were borne on stretchers. One poor fellow's breastbone had been shot away by the glancing blow of a shell, and he was in a desperate plight; I found him in the bush, fully a mile from the enemy's lines – he had actually walked all that way to escape falling into the hands of the Boers. He showed indomitable courage and patience as I placed him behind one of those giant anthills which are so common in that part of the world, for shelter from the enemy's fire, and I eventually had him carried, by stretcher-bearers, back to camp.

During that forenoon Colonel Plumer despatched a message to Commandant von Dalwig, requesting leave to send an ambulance to pick up our wounded, and he gave orders that we were not to fire on the enemy all day. At about midday two ambulance carts rumbled past me, escorted by surgeons, the Austrian Catholic Missionary, Father Hartmann and Archdeacon Upcher, of the Anglican Church. I begged leave to accompany them, as I knew a path pretty well which ran alongside the river nearly as far as Ramutsa; this we followed for about three miles, winding through the valley, until reaching the foot of the kopje which crowned the enemy's position; here we perceived signs of movement in the Boer camp, and half a dozen horsemen rode out from behind their stone sconces, galloping towards us, and threatening us with their rifles. I saw certain burghers deliberately unsling their rifles from their backs, steadying them on their thighs, while others, lying posted on the heights, covered us with their weapons.

'Get back! Get back!' shouted an officer, whom we afterwards learned was von Dalwig himself. 'Get back, or I'll fire!' Our ambulance carts halted. I could hear the Geneva Cross banners fluttering in the breeze. Father Hartmann strode out in front of our little party; he had a huge, white flag, attached to a pole, which he kept waving.

Cautiously von Dalwig approached, and Father Hartmann handed him a letter from our commanding officer. Slipping from his saddle, and throwing his reins over his horse's head, the Boer commandant read Colonel Plumer's request; then, with an impatient gesture, he tore it in fragments, and scattered the pieces to the winds. 'No! No!' said he. 'I shall not give you your wounded: your people let our General Kock bleed to death upon the battlefield; besides, your wounded are my prisoners!' Father Hartmann then approached the angry commandant, and, addressing him a few words in German, succeeded in pacifying him. 'Well,' said von Dalwig, 'I will give you your dead,

and there are three men grievously wounded – their legs have been amputated – you can have them !’

Von Dalwig then became far more agreeable, and, after we had all been searched to see whether we bore any arms, we were permitted to proceed. As we wended our way up the steep, rugged slopes, he turned to me, and, much to my astonishment, exclaimed : ‘You are the Artillery officer, so ?’

I replied, ‘Yes, but how did you know ?’

He laughed, and said : ‘I recognise your arm in a white sling. I watch you each day, through my telescope, directing the firing. See, you too have wounded me ; look at my thumb !’ Sure enough, his left thumb was bandaged !

‘Your men would not all come on last night,’ he resumed, ‘and it is lucky for them, or they would have all been killed ; had there been five hundred they could not have taken our fort. There is a brave fellow, an officer, up there !’ he continued, pointing towards the redoubt, which we had nearly reached by then. ‘He is dead. I fired the whole contents of my magazine into him, but still he crawled on, desperately wounded, beckoning to the men to follow him and waving them forward. He cut his way through the barbed-wire entanglements one by one ; there were four which he severed with a wire-clipper, and he died across the fifth. He was the bravest of the brave !’ said the gruff Boer leader, quite moved, and he added, with some asperity : ‘Tis a pity that such a noble fellow should die for blackguards like Chamberlain and Rhodes !’

Two corpses were lying within fifteen feet of the redoubt, torn and riddled with bullets : one was the body of Isherwood, a young clerk from Buluwayo ; during lifetime he had been a pale, delicate youth, so slight of frame, indeed, that he had been passed over by Major Bird in choosing the men for the assaulting-party, and so he had gone to Colonel the Hon. Harry White, who was wounded in this same engagement, and had begged him to take him. ‘Do, please, let me go, colonel !’ he had pleaded. ‘The men always chaff

me; I am never selected to go on any of the dangerous patrols, and my comrades may think I am afraid. You'll see, I'll do well !

The other body was that of Captain French, clenched in his right hand was a pair of wire-nippers, and in his left was a sword.

So impressed were the Boers with the valour of these two brave soldiers that they erected a cairn of stones and a rude cross on the spot where they fell.

Come from the four winds, O breath !

And breathe upon these slain that they may live.

One day near the outlying pickets, while I was standing next to Colonel Plumer, discussing the situation on the top of a kopje, the enemy, who had evidently spotted us, opened fire with a field-gun, and as the projectile seemed, by the note of its whining, to be flying straight at us, we both ducked, but Colonel Plumer, losing his balance, rolled down the hill in the most undignified fashion. As the shell whizzed over our heads, missing us by a few inches – indeed, I felt its wind – I burst into a roar of laughter, and, on clambering down the rocks to assist my commanding officer to regain his balance, I noticed that he was eyeing me with an expression of intense hatred. I shall always think that Plumer took many years to forgive me for what he deemed was a sneer. I really was not laughing at him at all. Why should I? His coolness and courage under fire were quite remarkable, and were admired by us all; but after a narrow escape from death – and I have suffered many in my lifetime – I have a habit of laughing heartily: it is due, perhaps, to a nervous reaction. However that may be, throughout the Boer War Plumer never lost an opportunity of snubbing me. Many years afterwards, during the Great War, in the summer of 1918, at a parade where decorations were being distributed to French soldiers and nurses, General Plumer, putting his arm through mine, led me across the

parade-ground before all the assembled troops, and introduced me to the Duke of Connaught as an old African war-comrade. I felt that, by this generous act, Plumer meant to express regret for his harshness to me in the past.

During February, with a view to accumulating supplies for the relief of Mafeking, Colonel Plumer commenced laying his plans for creating an auxiliary base to the west of the railway; in furtherance of this scheme, negotiations were opened up with Bathoen, chief of the Bangwaketsi tribe, and he acquiesced in a depôt being formed at his capital, Kanya, which lies some sixty-five miles to the north-west of Mafeking. So, during the month of February, convoys of ox-wagons were continually being despatched from Gaberones through the Kalahari desert.

On the 13th of March, Colonel Bodle in camp at Lobatsi, led a force of the B.S.A. Police as far south as Pitsani Pothlugo – Jameson's old camp, from which in December 1895 the raid had started – and on the 14th, Major Bird, with a column which included myself, started for Kanya. This division of our small force in the face of an active, enterprising enemy was bad strategy, and Bird, I believe, protested vigorously, but his protests were met by Colonel Plumer with his customary snub. Our men were in high spirits, notwithstanding, as the report was current that this march was the inception of a strategic movement for the relief of Mafeking.

We had trekked all day with only one halt, having covered about eighteen miles, and were outspanned at 7 p.m., awaiting dinner. I was resting by a wagon, talking to Major Bird, who had just confided in me that he would be surprised if the Boers did not attack Lobatsi in force, when we descried a dusty cyclist-scout hastening towards the camp; he was the bearer of a letter from Colonel Plumer.

Bird read the message with a grim smile, and remarked: 'There's no dinner for you to-night, my friend! You are to return to Lobatsi with the guns and a squadron, and you

must be there before dawn at all costs. Colonel Bodle has been attacked at Pitsani, and roughly handled; he is retreating rapidly, having lost some prisoners.'

There was nothing to be done but to saddle up, hook in, form column of route forthwith, and wend our way back, supperless, over the road we had just traversed. The men behaved nobly. I spoke to them individually, and pointed out the extreme urgency of this forced march which we were undertaking, and they set to work without a murmur. Some of the B.S.A. Police with the mountain-guns were on foot, and, as the sand in many places was over their ankles, they had a fearful day's work. It is true that on the return journey we had no impedimenta, no ox-wagons to delay us, but our little column, however, accomplished a great feat that day, covering fully thirty-five miles between the time when we marched out of Lobatsi lines and when we struggled back to the same point, just before 2 a.m. on the 15th of March – that is to say, in twenty-two hours.

Speaking for myself, I was so worn out that, after I had seen the horses and mules watered, fed, and secured in their lines, I flung myself down on the ground without removing, or even loosening, my belts, without even spreading out my blankets, and I slept like a dead man until seven o'clock. I was actually aroused by the sound of firing, and, leaping to my feet, I ordered the teams to be hooked in. Colonel Plumer sent for me and questioned me: 'You complained of this position for the guns the other day, where would you like to place them now?'

I glanced around rapidly, and replied:

'Oh! anywhere but here. We are commanded from every point of the compass. Might I suggest there?' – pointing to a knoll to our left.

'That is too far to our rear,' observed the colonel, just a little testily. 'Please note, I have three or four trains, stores, transport, ammunition, and a hospital with nurses there, in that gorge; it will take me all day to get them out. You

must hold a position in advance of that !' 'Well, then,' said I, 'over there' – pointing to a ridge to the right front. 'Good,' exclaimed the commanding officer. 'Go and examine the place, and, if you think well of it, take your twelve-pounder up there as fast as you can; and, remember, you must not stir from there, whatever may happen, until you get orders from me !'

We occupied this ridge for some thirty-six hours, being constantly under fire from two field-guns and a pom-pom; fortunately excellent cover was secured behind the razor-back crest of the hill which formed a natural gun epaulement; but we had neither food nor water, except such as we managed to collect in ground-sheets from a welcome shower during the night. I was supported by a squadron of the Rhodesia Regiment, under Captain McLaren, of the 13th Hussars. Our twelve-pounder was often hit by shell-splinters, but we succeeded in blowing up a limber, and it was said afterwards that we had killed twenty-five of the enemy.

While seated a few yards from me, under a tree, Lieutenant Tyler, of the West Riding Regiment, was struck by a shell, his head being almost severed from his body. McLaren had an extraordinary escape, as, if, two minutes earlier, I had not called to him to come and alter certain dispositions of his men, he would have been seated alongside Tyler, and must have shared that officer's fate.

At 6 p.m. on the 16th, the second day of our rearguard action, the welcome news was conveyed to me from Colonel Plumer that he had succeeded in withdrawing everything from Lobatsi gorge, and that we might retire. McLaren was ordered to lead his squadron by Kaffir paths over the mountain, and concentrate with the main column on the Kanya Road; while I was instructed to wait until darkness set in, and then, after withdrawing my gun from the ridge, trot along the old coach road through the defile, and entrain where the railway debouches from the pass on the way to

Ootsi. All preparations for our retreat were completed by 7 p.m., fires being kindled below the crest of the bluff, so as to give the enemy the impression that we were still encamped on the reverse slopes; a tree was even cut down, and its trunk thrust through the embrasure of the epaulement, with a view to deluding the Boers, when the sun rose on the morrow, into the belief that our gun was still in position.

It took us less than a quarter of an hour to lower the twelve-pounder down the steep descent of the kopje, and, silently, in the darkness we limbered up and trotted through the narrow defile to our rear. As we picked our way through the deserted camp, I had the utmost difficulty in restraining my men from falling out to appropriate the portable property abandoned by our troopers in their hasty retreat. There was an extraordinary collection of paraphernalia: cooking-pots, frying-pans, bandoliers, a saddle, some nose-bags, a musical-box, and rifle-cartridges were strewn about everywhere.

Feeling sure that the Boers must be occupying the pass, I fully expected to run into one of their patrols at any moment; the jingle of the harness, the clatter of the horses' and mules' hoofs, seemed to my anxious ears to make a fearful jangling, and to reverberate up the sides of the gorge, which rose like walls to our right and left. Of course, without an escort, and limbered up, we should have been helpless in the hands of the enemy, but I had the twelve-pounder loaded with a case-shot, and rode twenty yards or so in front with my heart in my mouth, keeping up a brisk trot to hasten the team along the road. The five miles seemed interminable, and yet it came to an end at last. Colonel Plumer was awaiting our arrival, and he heaved a sigh of relief when I rode up. 'I thought you were never coming!' he remarked.

It did not take us long to entrain gun, limber, wagon, horses, and mules, and by nine o'clock I was eating the first food which had passed my lips since 7 a.m. on the 15th of March – that is to say, for thirty-eight hours. I never knew

'bully' could taste so delicious. On the 17th of March, at dawn, we heard the Boers bombarding our evacuated trenches at Lobatsi, and, when the booming of their guns reached our ears, the men gave way to ironical cheers and a more or less tuneful rendering of 'St. Patrick's Day.'

By the 21st of March, Colonel Plumer had concentrated his column at Sefitele, rather more than thirty miles to the north-west of Mafeking. The Boers were never able to locate our camp there, and so we felt secure, at least from our human enemy. Nevertheless, the men, for a sinister reason, re-christened our bivouac Puff Adder Knoll !

Rumours of a relief column approaching from the south impelled the commanding officer to despatch patrols, during the latter part of March, as far as Ramathlabama, sixteen miles from Mafeking, and to Jan Massibi's kraal on the Molopo River, twenty-three miles due west of the beleaguered garrison, and on the 28th one of our reconnoitring parties crossed the Transvaal border and scouted in the direction of Zeerust. It was with a view to preserving the mobility of his force that Colonel Plumer wisely insisted on these activities, and, on the 31st of March, his column, from an advanced base at Ramathlabama, reconnoitred to within six miles of Mafeking; there a Boer commando, with unwonted enterprise and *élan*, attacked him, forcing him back along the railway and threatening both his flanks. The fight was a running one, and hardly an officer escaped scatheless: Plumer himself, his chief of the staff, Major Rolt, and Major Weston-Jarvis being wounded; Captain McLaren was missing, and Frank Milligan, the Yorkshire cricketer, and Fred Crewe, a Rhodesian pioneer, were killed – in all, we had over fifty casualties out of about three hundred engaged. In this combat, Captain Kinsman, of the Dublin Fusiliers, rallying some scattered troopers of a squadron whose officers were all casualties, with skill and courage, succeeded in preventing our left flank from being turned.

Our camp at Sefitele was situated hard by one of those

peculiar swamps to be found in the Kalahari desert, and which appear to be lakes in the process of being drained dry : these marshes, which are known as *vleis*, are quite respectable expanses of water during the rains, but, as the dry season advances, they become a mere collection of pools around which flock birds and beasts, so, during the month of April, we had plenty of fresh food, the guinea-fowl and korhahns abounding.

CHAPTER IX
THE RELIEF OF MAFEKING

The double, double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries 'Hark ! the foes come !
Charge, charge ! 'tis too late to retreat !'

JOHN DRYDEN

WHILE we were entrenched at Sefitele, Lieutenant Smitheman, our Intelligence officer, succeeded in slipping into Mafeking to have an interview with the commander of the garrison; on his return, we learned that the defence force were running short of ammunition, though well supplied with food, as they were butchering for meat their transport mules and the troop horses of the Protectorate Regiment; moreover, with a view to relieving himself of *bouches inutiles*, Colonel Baden-Powell was persuading the Baralong natives to escape from their *staadt* – or village – which, being within the sphere of defence of Mafeking, involved the officer commanding in responsibility for its provisioning and protection; hence during the month crowds of natives trooped out into the Kalahari desert. Despite a continuous bombardment, which had been maintained – Sundays excepted – since the 16th of October, the besieged were keeping up their spirits. The enceinte defended by Colonel Baden-Powell was from eight to nine miles in perimeter, so I do not believe that it could have ever been completely enveloped by the beleaguering force. In any case, on the outbreak of hostilities, a postal service by native runners had been established, and, throughout the investment, communication by letter with Mafeking was never interrupted. As officer commanding the armoured train nearest to Mafeking, all the garrison's outgoing mail

passed for a period through my hands; and I was amazed one day to see postage-stamps on the letters bearing the head of Colonel Baden-Powell, some officious admirer of the colonel's having rashly executed this piece of mischief unbeknown, probably, to the O.C. troops – a seemingly harmless gesture of admiration – but old Queen Victoria, I believe, never forgave this usurpation of her royal prerogative !

After the first few weeks of the siege, Cronjé had departed, leaving General Snyman in charge of the enemy's operations.

On the 12th of May, 1900, a telegram was received from Lord Roberts, bidding Colonel Plumer to expect a relief column from the south on about the 15th of May, and on the following day two messengers arrived from the column itself; they carried letters in cipher from Brigadier-General Bryan Mahon, worded in somewhat cryptic phraseology. 'Our stores,' he wrote, 'equal O.C. IXth Lancers; our numbers, ten times the Naval and Military Club and our guns, the boys in the Ward family.' This was interpreted to mean: 'Our stores are little' – Colonel Little being in command of the Ninth – 'our numbers nine hundred and forty' – 94 being the number of the club in Piccadilly – 'and our guns six' – we had neither a *Debrett* nor a *Burke's Peerage* with us; but one of Lord Dudley's brothers had been in South Africa, I had seen one riding races in England, and Captain Geoffrey Glyn knew three others.

On the 14th, we were joined by C Battery of the Canadian Artillery, under the command of Major Hudon, whose officers were Captain Panet and Lieutenants Leslie and King; their armament consisted of four short twelve-pounder guns – most indifferent weapons, with a maximum effective range of barely 4,000 yards. This battery had, on arrival from Canada, re-embarked at Capetown for Beira, whence they had marched, through Rhodesia, to take part with us in the relief of Mafeking. We also received, as reinforcements,

100 men of the Queensland Mounted Infantry, who, not having their horses, were compelled to tramp on foot. At 7 p.m. on the same day, we broke up camp at Sefitele, and moved southward; being ordered to march light, each man carried a day's rations, one blanket, and a filled nose-bag for his horse. The force in all consisted of 800 men, of whom 650 were mounted, and eight guns; there being four Canadian twelve-pounders, our own Vickers-Maxim quick-firer, one seven-pounder on wheels and two on mule-back.

We marched all night, having only one brief halt; and, as day dawned, our vedettes ran into those of General Mahon on the high ground beyond the Molopo River above Jan Massibi's kraal, some three and twenty miles due west of Mafeking.

By eight o'clock, our guns being parked, we were fraternising with the southern column and swapping yarns.

Our own trek had been a fine accomplishment, especially on the part of our Infantry, as we had covered twenty-eight miles in eleven hours. Never can I forget the cold I experienced riding across the high veld by night in thin khaki-cotton uniform; I could scarcely bear to touch my stirrup-irons, which seemed to freeze my feet through the boots.

Brigadier-General Mahon's march, however, is worthy of being recorded amongst the most memorable of such events.

Starting on the 4th of May from Barkly West, under cover of an action delivered by Sir Archibald Hunter at Rooidam for the express purpose of creating a diversion, he pursued his way northward; by the 7th he was at Taungs, having covered eighty-four miles, and by the 9th at Vryburg; on the 12th of May, the Boers being reported to have advanced from Mafeking and to be holding a position across the road, the relief column made a detour to the westward with a view to avoiding all opposition, but on the 13th, at a late hour in the afternoon, Mahon's troops ran into the enemy in the

dense bush, and for a time were checked, having thirty-one casualties: the only man killed with the guns being hit when actually standing behind the shield formed by the steel covers of the limber-boxes. After dark, the enemy having drawn off towards Sanie and Mafeking, Mahon was able to press on, reaching Jan Massibi's kraal, the appointed rendezvous with Plumer, at 6 a.m. on the morning of the 15th of May, after having covered 230 miles in eleven days, encumbered with transport, through that most inhospitable country known as the Great Thirst Desert. Among his troops were the Imperial Light Horse and M Battery R.H.A.; the big gun-horses had suffered more than the smaller troop-horses from want of water, besides, during the last two days, they had never had their harness removed.

It being decided by the brigadier-general to give the troops a rest, we spent quite a pleasant day. There was much discussion as to the probabilities of a fight on the morrow. We all felt confident of doing better than in the past, as we had trained and drilled our troops into rare trim during the six weeks which had been spent in camp at Sefitele; the incompetent and gun-shy had been weeded out as far as possible, while good men had been brought forward from our lines of communication to fill up the gaps caused by sickness and casualties, so altogether we shaped more like regular soldiers than heretofore.

Harland, poor fellow, as he said good night on the 15th, sang out to me: 'You'll see, the beggars won't fight to-morrow !'

At 3 a.m. on the 16th we stood to arms, and by 3.30 moved off. Brigadier-General Mahon being in command of the united columns, Colonel Edwards took charge of the left, while the right was composed of Colonel Plumer's force. Our right flank followed up-stream the bed of the Molopo River, two squadrons of B.S.A. Police being thrown across the spruit as a flank-guard; the guns were in the centre of the line, which covered a front of nearly five miles; the

Horse Artillery being on the left, the Canadians' twelve-pounders on the right, and ours in between.

When abreast of Sanie, the time being about 11 a.m., we received orders to water horses, so, bringing our guns into action by sections in turn, we led our teams down to the stream. While the guns were being limbered up, I heard rumours that our vedettes were engaged with the enemy, but, although I strained my ears, I could not detect the sound of firing.

The ground rises very gradually from the banks of the Molopo River in a direction east by north; up this slope we advanced, after lining up afresh, heading for the skyline. Very unexpectedly, shortly before noon, the crackling of rifle-fire broke out, and from that moment its drumming never ceased until long after sunset. To my left-rear, the ambulance carts, jolting across the veld, made their presence known by the fluttering of their huge Geneva-cross flags; a mile or more to the rear, I could see our supply wagons straggling through a drift, could even hear the crack of the transport-drivers' whips, and their shouts of encouragement to the mules.

Suddenly the report of a field-gun right in our front startled me, and all our line to the left seemed to jerk forward rapidly; a second roar, and then shells came thick and fast, high over our heads, pitching between us and our convoy, and sending up great columns of yellow dust, as though it were water. It was then that the Horse Artillery sprang forward, traces taut, and teams straining at their loads. The work being against the collar, and the poor horses in wretched condition, the result of their fortnight's hard marching, it was but a feeble gallop which they raised. They came into action on the crest, the teams halting just beyond. It was a bad Artillery position, devoid of cover, and they were greeted by a salvo from the Boer guns: a shell striking the lead-horses of the right sub-division, sending them sprawling in a horrid tangle of harness and blood; the

driver, unscathed, speedily cleared the poor beasts out of the way, and, with his comrades, brought the limber round to the rear; but as it turned, presenting its side to the line of fire, a second shell struck the top of the near wheel and, tearing away the felloes, penetrated the limber-box containing ammunition. I felt certain there must follow a terrific explosion, and instinctively covered my eyes with my hand, but to my amazement nothing occurred. All this takes some time to relate, but the events I have described passed like flashes, what time I myself was fully occupied with my duties.

Despite the warm reception they had encountered, the Horse Artillery were firing at ten-second intervals with the monotonous rhythm of a chime of bells.

To my right the Canadians, under Major Hudon, had opened fire so far to the front down the slope, that, had I come into action in line with the guns on my left, I must have endangered the Colonials. I unlimbered below the crest, and waited for the C.R.A. to help me out of my difficulty; this he did in about five minutes, by moving the Canadians a little to the right and retiring them a few yards. In the meanwhile, lying on the ground with my telescope sweeping the skyline, I was viewing the position. The enemy's guns were placed in scattered intervals, and our Horse Artillery was ranging on two pieces which were bombarding our left wing under Colonel Edwards; in the meantime, the gunners in their turn were being harassed by a quick-firer to my immediate front, which had their range to an inch. One projectile actually pitched on number one gun, and, exploding, killed the non-commissioned officer in charge; another struck the subaltern in command of the right section – apparently full in the face – and he too fell, seemingly lifeless!

At last I was able to commence firing, and decided to range on the gun which was doing the mischief; after my opening round the enemy turned his attention to me, and

his first shell ploughed up the ground six feet in front of the muzzle of our twelve-pounder, covering me with sand and almost blinding me. Then he opened with shrapnel, and, as they burst with a twang, the bullets came swishing over our heads, his fuses being timed too short – fortunately for us – we were often struck by spent bullets, which did no more than sting us like pellets fired from a boy's catapult; one well-timed shell, however, burst in front of Colonel Plumer and his staff, who were watching events a little to my right, and wrought havoc, every horse being struck save that of our own commanding officer. We also had a mule killed at this time. There was a white stone immediately in front of the Boer gun, and this assisted me considerably in ranging. In four rounds I found the range, and commenced firing shrapnel; profiting by the enemy's errors, I determined to lengthen my fuses until quite twenty-five per cent of my shells burst on impact; to my supreme satisfaction my bombardment was most effectual, the burghers being thrown into confusion immediately and seen to be busied in an attempt to haul their field-pieces out of action.

During all this time, our extreme right was heavily engaged, the squadron recently taken over by Lieutenant Harland being in the thick of the fighting, advancing with short rushes, and responding well to their gallant leader's handling. Major Bird, who was in command of the troops on our right flank, having been struck in the leg by a bullet fired from a stone scone about 800 yards to his front, was hopping towards an outcrop of rock to obtain shelter, when he was wounded twice again in rapid succession; before he could settle himself behind cover, he was hit altogether seven times. With that strength of will, and strong sense of duty, so characteristic of this fine soldier, he wrote out a message to Lieutenant Harland, with a view to handing over to him the charge of the right wing, confident that in the young Irishman he might find a fitting substitute. Harland, hurrying across from his position at the head of

his squadron, and deeply concerned at the knowledge that his friend and leader was so severely wounded, knelt down beside him to ask for instructions and to express his sympathy. Hardly had he done so, when, aimed by the hand of the same inexorable burgher who had already laid low his senior officer, a bullet passed through Harland's head, killing him instantaneously, his body falling athwart Bird's legs, and lying there for some hours, thus adding to the wounded man's intense suffering, physical and moral.

The steady front presented by Harland's squadron had disheartened the Boers, who drew off and worked round more to our right, apparently with a view to cutting us off from the Molopo River, our only water supply, and menacing our line of communications to the westward. These tactics on the part of the enemy had weakened the middle of his line, thus, as our centre pressed forward, following up its advantage, we formed towards evening a sort of double echelon with both flanks thrown back. By 5.30 p.m. our artillery was close to Israel's farm, within nine miles of Mafeking.

Heavy firing broke out afresh at about this time, and the Canadian and Rhodesian batteries were exposed to a vindictive bombardment from a well-concealed automatic one-pounder which we despaired of locating. Its small shells, however, appeared endowed with a positive genius for missing their mark, for, though projectiles rained around us, I know of only one man who was hit by one of them. He, poor fellow, suffered execrably. I crawled on my hands and knees across to him, to give him a drink of water from my bottle, and was appalled to find that his entrails were protruding from his back; I had a large flask of whiskey in my pocket, and I begged him to drain it in the hope that it might deaden his senses, but he refused to touch it! He implored me to turn him over on his back, but, owing to the nature of his terrible wound, I dared not do so. I had to return to my duties, so had to leave him; but I felt quite

unnerved and depressed. I learned two hours later that he was dead. I regretted at the time that I had not had a revolver with me, for I believe, and hope, that I should have had the moral courage to blow out his brains and thereby save him some hours of torture; but I never carried a weapon of any sort throughout the campaign – indeed, had Captain Llewellyn not promised to lend me his sword on the night when I volunteered to lead the assault on the redoubt at Crocodile Pools, in the early days of the war, I should have had to go unarmed.

Father Hartmann, the Roman Catholic missionary, with a courage which was quite sublime, walked fearlessly about in the firing line, joking with the men to cheer them, and consoling the dying and wounded.

As the sun dipped low in the western sky, our line became more and more disordered, our centre curving round until it almost faced our right flank, and I dreaded firing into our own troops – a dread which in modern warfare always haunts the field artilleryman. On the left, Colonel Edwards had had less fighting than Colonel Plumer, and at 7 p.m. Major Karri Davis, of the Imperial Light Horse, ventured to try and push his way into Mafeking; he was quite successful, finding the road open, encountering no opposition whatever.

As the shadows of the night settled down on the terrain, the firing gradually slackened, but it broke out again from time to time right up to eight o'clock.

At 8 p.m. we were advancing in line, our commanding officer and his staff being immediately behind me, when a body of troops in close formation appeared through the darkness in our immediate front, less than three hundred yards distant. Coming promptly into action, I ordered the twelve-pounder to be loaded with case-shot; some of our men challenging the oncomers, they turned out to be our own troops – I believe the Queenslanders.

At 9 o'clock, I prepared to bivouac for the night, in full

expectation of having to go supperless to bed, when I received a welcome invitation from Sir John Willoughby, who was accompanying Brigadier-General Mahon in the capacity of a newspaper-correspondent, to come and partake of a meal. Sir John was famous for his hospitality and skill as a caterer, even in the wilderness, and I need not relate how well I was entertained. To us, seated around his wagon, rumours came thick and fast: one was that the Boers had assaulted Mafeking two or three days previously, and, after having captured a fort, were compelled to surrender to the garrison.

Another story was passed round to the effect that the Bishop of Mashonaland was missing. Both these tales were true: in searching the ground for the wounded in one of our ambulance carts, the reverend gentleman almost ran into a Boer picket under cover of darkness, and was promptly fired on by the burghers, who mistook the vehicle for a gun; the mules stampeding, the bishop was left on the veld to find his way back to camp on foot; he was missing for nearly two days, and was eventually conducted to Mafeking by some natives.

At about 10 p.m. I returned to my lines, much refreshed with the excellent supper I had eaten, but worn out with fatigue, I soon fell into a deep sleep, and it took some rough handling to awaken me a little later. The disturber of my repose was an orderly, with instructions for us to be ready to march forthwith. Looking up at the stars, I realised at once that it was not much past midnight.

In about half an hour's time we moved off in column of route, I being very near the head of the column. After marching for about two hours, we discerned the lights in Mafeking twinkling ahead of us. Within a mile of the town, I heard Colonel Baden-Powell's voice hailing Colonel Harry White. 'Is that the Mayor of Buluwayo?' he enquired.

'Yes,' cheerily replied White, who had been raised to the rank of civic dignitary just before the outbreak of the war.

In less than an hour we were parked inside the lines of Mafeking a few yards from the native *staadt*, and fires were being lighted, while some of the inhabitants came to greet us.

When it became daylight on the 17th of May, I was able to make a cursory inspection of the town we had come to relieve after so many months of hard campaigning. Even clad in the russet mantle of the dawn, it must be admitted that it was somewhat disappointing; nothing was to be seen but a scattered collection of rather shabby-looking corrugated-iron huts; and the more I gazed at the place which has made such a stir in modern South African history, the less I was impressed. To me the whole affair of the siege was at the time, and has always been, an enigma: what in the world was the use of defending this wretched railway dépôt and these tin shanties?

To burrow underground, on the very first shot being fired in a campaign, and to commence eating his horses, seemed to me the strangest rôle ever played by a Cavalry leader with his regiment of mounted men; by so doing, the action was fettered of useful troops which, had their mobility been preserved, might have been better employed, as Plumer's force had been, in patrolling frontiers, in making raids into the Transvaal, and in harassing the enemy.

The defence of Mafeking also imposed on the commander-in-chief of the forces in South Africa the necessity for detaching a column, hazarding it in a dangerous march – 'up in the air,' as the strategists say – exposed to flank attacks for the best part of two hundred and fifty miles, all for the purpose of avoiding the loss of prestige to our flag which the surrender of this not very important garrison might have involved.

In the second place, I marvelled why the Boers had made no genuine attempt to capture the town. I afterwards learned, on the 'unimpeachable authority' of an American writer, that Kruger used to fly into a passion whenever an assault on Mafeking was suggested. On the 20th of

October, 1900, General Cronjé reported that he believed he could carry the place, and, having a considerable force under him at that date, asked permission to make the attempt; but Kruger roundly declared that Mafeking was not worth the lives of five Transvaal burghers, and strictly enjoined Cronjé that not a single life was to be wasted on attacking the place, ordering him to confine his attention to watching Colonel Baden-Powell and seeing that he did not escape. Cronjé, disgusted with such a rôle, left for Kimberley, handing over charge of the operations to General Snyman and a few hundred Boers, who were only too pleased to be allotted this soft job of squatting in trenches out of the range of the British rifles. So it came about that both besieged and besiegers were playing one another's game.

Howbeit, during May 1900 the eyes of the civilised world were concentrated on this insignificant railway depôt, and it became a point of honour with England that her arms should not be tarnished by the capitulation of its garrison; that on the contrary its brave and patient defenders should be relieved without delay; while, on the other hand, eager to retrieve some of their lost prestige, the Dutch Republics, unburthened of the arrogant dictatorship of 'Oom Paul,' whose influence in their councils had by this time begun to evaporate, determined to make one last bid for a prize; for such would have been the surrender of any British force whatever at this stage of the campaign, when the Boers' fortunes were ebbing fast.

On the twelfth of the month, accordingly, while Brigadier-General Mahon was hotfoot on his relief march, Veld-Cornet Eloff undertook to lead a forlorn hope of French soldiers of fortune, who had volunteered for the task, in an attempt to storm the stronghold. The plan was well conceived. Eloff made a dash along the bed of the Molopo River before dawn, and, seizing the *staadt* of the Baralong natives, set fire to the huts. This caused some temporary confusion in the garrison's outposts, and thus, masked by the conflagration, the

daring party was able to penetrate into the enceinte, capturing the B.S.A. Police barracks and fort, making prisoners Colonel Hore, commanding the Protectorate Regiment, and Captain Singleton of the Highland Light Infantry.

When the confusion had subsided, Captain Frank Marsh, of the Queen's Own, promptly realising the state of affairs, assembled the men of his squadron, and, lining them across the intervening ground between the Police Fort and the *staadt*, effectually cut off Eloff's little band from its supports, which were promptly surrounded and compelled to lay down their arms.

In the meantime, no attempt whatever was made by the Boers investing Mafeking to follow up Eloff's initial success; in short, with execrable pusillanimity, the enemy abandoned his advance guard to its fate. Thus it came about that, after waiting all day for reinforcements which never came, Eloff and the French Volunteers actually surrendered to Colonel Hore, their own prisoner of war. There can be no doubt that, having contrived to push a wedge into the line of defence, the Boers should have been encouraged to follow up their preliminary success by a general assault, and with reasonable prospects of ultimate victory, on the very eve, too, of the relief of Mafeking.

The French Volunteers were served by the Boers in much the same scurvy fashion as Lafayette would assuredly have been treated by the Americans, when he advanced from Virginia in the late summer of 1781, had he failed to out-general Cornwallis and the English in the Yorktown campaign. The truth is that foreigners, who are enthusiastic in some abstract cause, are never made welcome in any human revolt: they are like the stranger who intervenes in the domestic squabbles of man and wife !

Such was the state of affairs, when the brigades of General Mahon and Colonel Plumer entered the town at 4 a.m. on the 17th of May, 1900.

Soon after sunrise on that date, a dropping rifle-fire was

opened, from the sangars to the north of the town, upon the relief column, bivouacked near the charred ruins of the Baralong *staadt*, so, ordering teams to be hooked in, I prepared for eventualities. My orders came shortly afterwards: I was to move through the town and shell the enemy's laager to the east. We trotted out at a rare pace through the streets, and had the satisfaction of coming into action fully five minutes ahead of any of the other guns. We commenced ranging on a large building over which a flag was flying, which I mistook for a store or barrack; it was an excellent target, and we soon sent a shell through the roof and another through the side wall. A regular stampede was immediately discernible amongst the burghers, who seemed to be unaware of the presence in the town of the relief column, or of any artillery superior to certain old relics of the days of Nelson.

At that juncture, Colonel Nicholson, appearing on the scene, cheerily enquired, 'What are you firing at?'

'That building,' I replied, busying myself to deliver a further cannonade.

'Great heavens! That's their hospital,' he exclaimed. And so it was!

My fire, however, had resulted in some good, for the enemy's medical staff, in wild panic, rushing headlong from the hospital, abandoned their patients, amongst whom was Captain McLaren, their prisoner of war, at that time convalescent, and who might otherwise have been borne off as a valuable hostage, but who, through my blunder, was restored to us.

We were all mightily pleased to see this officer again, having for some days believed him to be dead.

By the time that all our guns were directed on the laager, the enemy was in full flight. I saw one old-fashioned vortrekker's wagon, with white awning, careening across the veld with many a jolt, like a sailing ship, close-hauled, beating against a choppy sea. We dropped a shell plumb on it, and the awning seemed to melt away or burst like a bubble

and volatilise with the smoke of our shell's explosion. The wagon, too, stopped with a jerk, and figures like ants could be seen scurrying away from it.

Our mounted infantry soon took possession of the evacuated camp. The burghers had bolted, leaving everything, even watches and money, in their bivouac, just as though the Devil himself had been on their heels ! Seeing a mob of fugitives streaming away to the eastern horizon, I volunteered to limber-up and chase them, but this was not permitted, and, to my amazement, all our troops were recalled instead of being urged to press in pursuit of the demoralised burghers.

'The losses sustained in battles are as nothing compared with those inflicted on the backs of a flying enemy,' says Gibbon. Surely, never have victors missed such a chance of converting a victory into a rout !

The British Army has a deservedly high reputation for parades and pageantry; indeed, more space than is warranted by their relative importance was provided in its official drill-books for ceremonial than for battle manœuvres. So, succumbing to the British predilection for display and *panache*, our troops, instead of harassing our flying foes in the rear, filed on to the market square, to march past the officer commanding the garrison, and be harangued by him.

Feeling most disinclined for the roaring and the wreaths, I contrived to slip away unperceived to our lines, where, flinging myself on the ground under the shadow of a wall, I took a much-needed rest. Colonel Plumer, however, sent for me during the afternoon, and complimented me on the fine conduct of our section of Artillery and on its promptness in coming into action.

In the afternoon, I strolled about the town and examined some of the ingenious bomb-proof shelters which had been constructed by the garrison. The place was like a rabbit-warren, being honeycombed with subterranean dens; while Brer Boer was shelling the tin shanties, Brer Briton, he lay

low ! So long as the valiant citizens of Mafeking remained underground the burghers had no more chance of slaying them than a child might have of tickling the Pope by caressing the dome of St. Peter's at Rome.

I paid a visit to the hospital, where I saw some sad sights – old friends lying grievously wounded ; amongst them being Major Bird, who had lain out all through the night on the battlefield by Israel's farm ; Lieutenant Gray of the Horse Artillery too, who had apparently been struck full in the face by a shell ; he had escaped comparatively cheaply, marvellous to relate, the projectile having grazed his head, stunning him and breaking his nose ! Years afterwards, this fine officer fell in the Great War.

The gaol was interesting to me also, for there the prisoners of war were confined ; amongst them was a Frenchman whom I knew by sight, and the valiant Veld-Cornet Eloff, who, poor fellow, was pacing the courtyard like a caged lion. There, too, most unhappily was incarcerated a besotted creature well known as a cricketer, sportsman, and favourite of society in former years : he had been placed under arrest for conduct which had exhausted even the patience of the genial Baden-Powell. One or two of us pleaded for this wretch, who, being permitted to find his way back to England unpunished, requited the forbearance of the illustrious officer commanding the Mafeking garrison by maligning him whenever he might do so with impunity.

The extraordinary skill with which the defences of the perimeter had been designed and connected by telephones with the controlling centre excited my admiration, and gave evidence of the influence of a master mind for organisation.

On the evening of the 17th some of us were entertained by the Weils, whose foresight in stocking their depôts with provisions had contributed in no small measure to the stubbornness of the defence. For seven months I had 'pigged' it on the veld, and the sensation of eating at a table and drinking out of a glass once more was joy indeed !

Belated letters, too, came to hand in mail-bags which had been held up in Mafeking during the siege. Some of them made droll reading: one in particular, under a date three weeks before the launching of the ultimatum by Kruger, was from one of the best known of our statesmen, who sapiently pooh-poohed the possibility of war, asserting that 'Oom Paul' was sure to climb down !

Before dawn on the 18th we were off to the northward to cover the gangs working to repair the railway. We proceeded as far as Ramathlabama, sixteen miles from Mafeking, without a halt and without breakfast. In all my experience of soldiering, I have never known men so sulky, or march with such bad grace, as ours that day; after the hard trekking and fighting of the previous few days, the volunteers felt themselves entitled to a rest, more especially as there was a glamour about the relief of Mafeking which lent colour to the impression that a halting-place had been reached in the even tenor of the operations of war; they resented bitterly being hurried out of town into the harsher conditions of campaigning on the veld !

I myself thought that march would never end. We moved across the old battle-ground of the 31st of March, where so many of our comrades had been laid low, and our troops came upon the skeleton of poor Frank Milligan, the Yorkshire cricketer, whose corpse had not been found at the time by our burial parties; his stiffened hand was uplifted as though shielding his eyes from the sun.

From our camp on the railway the united columns of Plumer and Baden-Powell – each of whom had been promoted to the rank of major-general – invaded the Western Transvaal and occupied Lichtenburg, Otto's Hoop, and Zeerust by the second week of June. I myself formed part of the advance guard as we marched through Zeerust, and it seemed to me, after the dreary desert of Bechuanaland, that we were entering a Promised Land: everywhere there were picturesque homesteads, reminding me of a painting

by Wouverman, with fruit trees, poultry-yards, cattle, thatched outhouses, and sometimes even a sleepy old grey mare, white with age.

I was continually in the vanguard throughout the winter and spring of 1900 in the campaign in the Western Transvaal, being present at the operations at Eland's River, Rustenburg, and Olifant's Nek, although suffering from a wound in the hand received at Crocodile Pools and which had become septic; I was weakened, too, by attacks of malaria and dysentery. At Rustenburg, for some weeks, we were cut off from both west and east, and this gave occasion for grinning coxcombs to deride General Baden-Powell, and declare that he carried a siege about with him wherever he went. Howbeit, the force at his command was grotesquely inadequate to hold the vast territory between Bechuanaland and Pretoria – it was, indeed, folly to have attempted to do so.

At Eland's Drift, Captain FitzClarence, V.C., gave us a taste of his military genius. None of us, I dare say, contemplated that day, as we galloped at a Boer commando, that our gallant leader would one day, by his valour and soldierly skill, save England's battle-line in the very direst crisis in her history¹; but none of us, I dare swear, doubted his competence to do so.

General Plumer had a peculiar genius for discovering talent in young officers, and for giving them scope to prove their worth; he never laid his hand, however, upon a more efficient officer than Major W. D. Bird of the Queen's Regiment. In later years Major Bird became the commandant of the Indian Staff College, and the outbreak of the Great War found him at the head of a battalion of Irish Rifles. At the Battle of the Aisne, in October 1914, he lost his leg, and the Army was deprived of his services in the fighting zone – a terrible loss, indeed, for, with his great knowledge

¹ When the British line was broken by the Prussian Guards at Gheluvelt in October 1914.

of war, he must have risen to the very highest rank. It was in the hour of gravest danger that this officer's genius shone at its best; nor have I ever met a soldier who has inspired me with so much confidence as a leader.

To me it has always seemed that FitzClarence was the brain of the Mafeking defence force, and Bird that of the relief column. During the operations between Rustenburg and Uitvaal Pass we especially felt the loss of Major W. D. Bird and Lieutenant Harland, both of whom were casualties at the relief of Mafeking; orders were no longer clear, nor even regularly issued, and I had to complain more than once to our chief that I seldom knew what I was expected to do. Aided by the shrewd judgment and skill in patrolling and scouting of the officers we had lost, we might not have been so constantly outmanœuvred by Generals de Wet and Lemmer, who fooled Baden-Powell and Plumer, and escaped capture when both these redoubtable Boer leaders might have fallen into our hands during July and August 1900 at Olifant's Nek or Commando Poort. Baden-Powell, being the senior by a few minutes, was actually in command, nevertheless in the ranks of the relief column and defence force a certain amount of misunderstanding reigned, and the staff work was decidedly bad – we were constantly perplexed with orders and counter-orders. One day we would evacuate some key position in the Magaliesberg mountain, only to be ordered twenty-four hours later to recapture it at any cost.

As I was climbing, on foot, the rough, rocky ground beyond the prison at Rustenburg one morning, a burgher, leaping to his feet from behind an earthwork abandoned by our troops some days previously, levelled his Mauser at me, he being less than one hundred yards away. Just as he fired, I flung myself on my face, and escaped scatheless; raising myself on my elbows a minute later, and peering after him from behind a stone, I watched him scuttle and limp away to join his comrades.

The impossibility of holding the Western Transvaal was brought home to Lord Roberts, the commander-in-chief, by the middle of August, and we were ordered to retire on Pretoria. Between Rustenburg and Commando Poort every farm was burnt by our troops in the most wanton fashion, and I could scarcely restrain my indignation.¹ It is difficult to account for the vindictive hatred evinced by South African Colonials for the Boers, who resemble them in so many ways; all humanity, all pity, seemed to be extinguished in their breasts; it required a creature with the soul of a werewolf, indeed, to set a torch to the pleasant homesteads, inhabited only by women and children, which we passed on our march. The spectacle of a column of smoke rising to the skies from every point of the compass inspired me with a yearning to quit this hateful task of making war upon a people fighting to defend their hearths and homes.

In August, General Baden-Powell left us, to raise a new force of *gendarmarie* in the Transvaal, and General Plumer resumed the sole command of the two Mafeking columns.

At Warmbad, north of Pretoria, in September 1900, General Plumer's brigade formed part of Paget's Division; and, in some fierce fighting in the thick bush, that valiant, cheery pioneer Colonel Jack Spreckley fell, universally mourned.

Early in September I received orders to escort a convoy into Pretoria, and this was welcome news, as I was longing for a few of the lesser fleshpots of civilisation which I hoped to enjoy in the capital of the Transvaal. I arrived at Das Poort after marching all day without any misadventure, save that my flanking vedettes were continually fired upon by burghers concealed in the mountains.

At 7 a.m. next morning, I rode from Das Poort into Pretoria. The city lies in a hollow surrounded by mountains, and, as I entered the streets and contemplated the pretentious

¹ Lord Roberts was furious when he heard of these burnings and ordered the practice to cease.

buildings, including the hotel, ahead of me, visions of a tasty breakfast of eggs and bacon, of a clean table-cloth and napkin, loomed large in the immediate prospect.

Handing my charger over to a negro in the yard of the inn, I made my way to the coffee-room, all agog for a decent meal.

'What have you for breakfast?' I enquired of the coloured and obsequious *maitre d'hôtel*.

'Porridge, sir!' he replied.

'Have you any fresh milk?'

'No, sir.'

'Have you any tinned milk?'

'No, sir.'

'Well, I won't have porridge. What else have you?' I continued, my hopes ebbing fast.

'Cold bullock's heart, sir. Nothing else!'

Words failed me to express my disappointment. Cold bullock's heart! What a breakfast! My gorge rose at it! I made my meal off black coffee and biscuits!

At Pretoria the most unexpected friends turned up; old friends from the racecourse, from the hunting-field, from Piccadilly, from Throgmorton Street, all met at the club, which was overcrowded at all times with an *olla podrida* of humanity.

The headquarters of every British army in the field attracts with its effulgent rays many satellites into its system: it has always puzzled me to know how duties can be found for some of the minor planets.

One evening, having met two very old friends, Harry and Freddy Vignoles, congenial spirits – desperate fellows too, at practical joking – I played pool with them until the small hours, when suddenly there appeared on the threshold of the billiard-room a stoutish man of about fifty years of age, dressed in pyjamas, who, addressing us in the most arrogant tone, cried out: 'Clear out of this, and get to bed at once, you young officers! I won't have this noise!'

'Whom are you calling "young officers," you silly old man?' we shouted, and, with that, we seized him and ran him round the table, prodding him with cues until he sank down, exhausted, and purple with indignation. The pompous old fool ordered us into arrest, and vainly insisted on knowing our names and regiments, but, as we bore no badges whatever on our worn and tattered khaki uniforms, and as we expected to be miles away on the veld on the morrow, the more he blustered and threatened, the more we laughed at him and mocked him, until finally, worn out with our 'ragging,' he begged us to let him go. This we did, and retired, ourselves, to rest. On the following day, my friends trekked off at dawn, but to my consternation I received orders to wait in Pretoria for General Plumer's brigade.

During the following afternoon I went to the Irish Hospital, to visit a friend, and, while waiting in the ante-room, suddenly turning giddy, I fell to the floor in a faint. For months I had been suffering from dysentery and malaria, and I was reduced to a skeleton. When I recovered consciousness, I found myself in one of the wards, with a doctor bending over me.

'What are you doing here?' he enquired.

'I am not a patient,' I replied, 'but only a visitor.'

'Not a patient!' he retorted. 'Then you ought to be one!'

I was kept in hospital for a few days, during which time I seemed to grow weaker and weaker. One day there was a commotion in my ward, and I asked what was the matter. 'The commander-in-chief is taking a look round,' I was told.

As the Field-Marshal appeared in the alley between the cots on the far side of the hospital, I recognised, to my horror, strutting in his wake, the very officer whom I had assisted to 'rag' in the billiard-room of the club, and he bore, moreover, the outward and visible sign of being a person of considerable importance: turning my face to the wall, I shammed sleep until the danger was past.

At the end of the week I was granted sick-leave, and permitted to travel south to Capetown in a hospital train. The journey seemed interminable, as Geneva-cross trains were compelled, by agreement with the enemy, to stable at nights in some siding or dead-end, and were only allowed to proceed between sunrise and sunset. We often heard firing during the dark hours of the night, indeed, all through the Orange Free State, I saw evidence of the war being still in full swing.

Our veteran commander-in-chief seemed quite baffled; as soon as he had quenched some outbreak in one direction the fighting burst forth in another quarter – just as when in trying to smooth out the surface of a deflated rubber ball, one thinks the task completed, when, lo ! the other side is revealed indented. On one occasion, looking out of the window of my compartment at dawn, I descried a sorry-looking detachment of soldiers limping along the railway.

‘What are you doing ?’ I enquired.

‘We are prisoners, sir !’ replied the men, somewhat sheepishly.

‘What ?’ said I.

‘Prisoners of war,’ repeated the sergeant. ‘We were captured last night; the Boers took away our rifles, and then released us.’

‘Why didn’t you go for them with the bayonet ?’

‘Please, sir !’ bleated the man, ‘we hadn’t an officer with us !’

‘Where are your boots ?’ I asked.

‘Oh, the Boers took those, too !’ whined the soldiers.

Sure enough, the men were as barefooted as so many vagrants !

After six days and six nights we arrived at Capetown, and were all shipped off to hospital at Wynberg, there to await the next meeting of a medical board which was to decide what was to be done with us.

On two or three nights I dined at the convalescent officers’

mess; there I met an interesting character, Commandant Boch, who had commanded the daring patrol which had lined Korn Spruit and captured seven of our Horse Artillery guns. He was a German, and, if somewhat truculent, was a brave fellow who had been captured in a fight subsequent to General Broadwood's defeat at Sanna's Post, but only when his leg had been shot to a pulp and he had fainted from loss of blood; this terrible wound had necessitated amputation, and the poor patient had suffered unspeakably, but had borne his pain without a murmur, and at the time when I met him was on the high road to recovery.

I used to sit and talk with him. Lord ! how he hated the English. I told him that I sympathised with the Boers, and hoped they might retain their independence. He did not seem to like me any better for this, indeed, he was quite indifferent to my sentiments. He told me that he had been in a Prussian Cavalry regiment, I forget which one, but one which, in a previous generation, had charged in von Bredow's death-ride at Mars-la-Tour. One evening at mess, an unsophisticated youth enquired of the truculent German : 'What do you consider were the best guns you had in the war ?'

'The ones we took from you !' he retorted, with all the insolence of a Prussian *junker*; whereupon his egregious catechiser relapsed into silence.

A medical board at Wynberg took a somewhat serious view of my case and granted me sick-leave. I found it most difficult to secure a passage on any ship, as nepotism and favouritism were rife in the allotment of berths; but eventually I travelled to England in the *Aurania*, which was transporting the City Imperial Volunteers back to England. As we steamed across Table Bay, rumours spread that Lord Kitchener, fully alive to the heavy task ahead of him, was bringing all his influence to bear to prevent the return of this fine body of men: some cynics among my fellow-passengers declared that the war had barely begun, and,

when we dropped anchor in the offing, glibly prophesied that we should be signalled to return before we had well got under weigh.

Lord Kitchener, though an experienced campaigner, was a child in matters political. He had not reckoned with the party-organisers and canvassers in England, all agog in the autumn of 1900 for the general election then impending. It behoved those who had piloted us into the Boer War, under the pretence that it could only last three months, to give currency to the falsehood that the war was over, what time the electors were being cajoled to return them to Parliament; so the City of London Volunteers and the Guards were brought home to give colour to the fiction !

As our good ship was hove-short on her cable off the shore, awaiting final orders, I contemplated the beautiful Table Mountain for the second time in my life as a traveller homeward bound, and vowed to myself that nothing should drag me back to accursed Africa.

After fully three weeks at sea, during which time my health recovered with astounding rapidity, we arrived at Southampton. Many engagements had been made between travelling companions, during the voyage, to celebrate at well-known London cafés the first night of their arrival; but these were all blown to the winds when the mail-bag was brought on board and letters from relatives and friends were read, for we were at home; and home meant to many of my shipmates more than it had ever meant before !

CHAPTER X

TREASURE-HUNTING ON COCOS ISLAND

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes. . . .

The Tempest, Act I, scene ii.

MY mother died on the same day as Queen Victoria; having been born in the spring of 1837, she lived exactly the duration of the longest reign in English history. While dying, she kept muttering: 'How strange it will be when that old Queen is gone !'

A queer contrast these two formed, indeed, as they crossed the river together: Victoria, so illustrious on earth, and my mother, so unimportant judged by this life's standards, yet looking so very like a queen. She passed a life of poignant disappointment, poor soul, as she was ambitious in a social sense and loved admiration; many a time have I heard her mutter with a sigh, while musing in her armchair before the fire: 'Only fools marry !'

She had looked forward to entering one of the great historic families in Europe when, in 1861, she married my father in Quebec, whereas my people, through many misfortunes, had lost prestige, wealth, and all save their empty titles and their pride. The estates in County Kilkenny, which had been ours for seven centuries, had passed, by reason of a fraternal feud, at the close of the eighteenth century, to a female branch of our house.

My mother's death completely altered my plans, so that I have never returned to South Africa, and, having severed all connection with the Army, I retired into civil life.

The Boer War dragged on its weary and discreditable

length for another year or so, there being many deplorable incidents; nothing, however, aroused my indignation so much as the shooting of Commandant Scheepers by the British: he was tried by court-martial for blowing up a troop-train conveying our men to or from the front, which is a perfectly fair operation of war. He was found guilty, I believe, of murder and arson, and was executed. But it defies the wit of man to explain how a soldier fighting for his country can be guilty of murder of combatants, or arson.

I wrote a few articles for the *Daily News* in which I attacked the Government's policy at the Cape, especially denouncing the arming of Bechuanas to fight the Dutch. These caused a sensation at the time: questions were asked in Parliament, and, when the Foreign Secretary was confronted by Mr. A. B. Markham with my statements and some photographs which I had taken on the spot, he had to amend a previous declaration made to the House of Commons; he expressed his regret at this most flagitious incident and apologised handsomely.

One day in the Naval and Military Club, Major Rolt, staff officer to General Plumer at the relief of Mafeking, told me that I had been recommended for the D.S.O. for my services in the war; however that may be, I heard no more about it, and I confess I was glad that I was awarded nothing, as my conscience would never have allowed me to accept such a reward while feeling so very strongly the injustice of our cause against the Boers.

For the next year or so I worked as a *remisier* in the Stock Exchange: this was an occupation I loathed; besides, I found it easier to make bad debts than big commissions.

I was present in Throgmorton Street, after the House had closed, during the sensational rise in the shares of the Northern Pacific Railway: a corner had been created, and dealings in the stock were suspended on the morrow. Standing next to me, near Shorter's Court, was old Mr. Henry Oppenheim, who had spent a lifetime in the City. He told

me that he had never witnessed such scenes: members were shouting and screaming, as though demented, and one was led away by his friends, quite mad!

It was in 1903 that I first heard about the treasure supposed to be deposited on Cocos Island. I was told of it by my great friend, Harold Gray, who in more recent years was the member for Cambridgeshire in one session of Parliament (1922). In his turn Gray had been given the secret by Admiral Palliser, who, while commanding the Pacific Squadron in 1897, had been persuaded by a man of the name of Haffner to anchor his flagship, H.M.S. *Impérieuse*, off the island, and had been reprimanded by the Admiralty for allowing his crew to trespass on Costa Rican territory. Palliser was on the look-out for the owner of a yacht whom he might persuade to undertake the adventure which he was planning. In those days, before the Panama Canal was completed, the enterprise bristled with difficulties, as a suitable boat was quite unobtainable on the Pacific coast of Central America, a sailing-vessel being not worth considering for such a cruise through the doldrums, and steam-coal being dear and hard to procure in that part of the world.

The history of the treasure begins in romantic fashion. During the civil war in Peru in 1819, the crew of the schooner *Mary Read*,¹ or *Mary Dier*, mutinied while in charge of a cargo of gold bars, specie, jewels, and church ornaments in Callao Harbour, and, putting to sea, concealed their booty – so it is believed – in a cave on Cocos Island, a tiny spot in the ocean a few degrees north of the equator and some five hundred miles west of Panama.

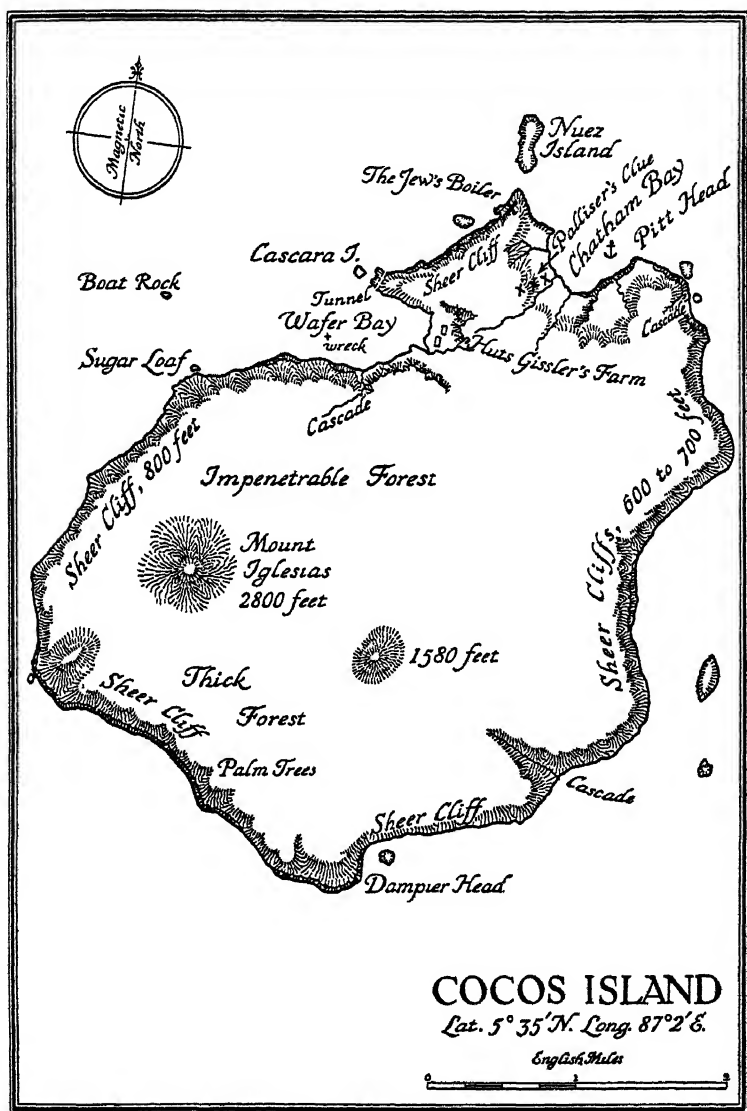
Other deposits are supposed to have been hidden in the same island by the pirate Benito Bonito, who may have been an Englishman known as Bennet Graham.

¹ Mary Read was a female pirate who was sentenced to death for piracy in 1721 at Jamaica. She escaped the gallows by dying in childbirth.

My maturer judgment, born of a careful investigation of facts in later years, has led me to disbelieve in the story of the mutiny of the *Mary Read*. Lord Cochrane, in the Chilean frigate *O'Higgins*, was cruising off the Peruvian coast from January 1819 until 1823, maintaining a blockade of Callao in support of San Martin's operations on the mainland; the story of the loss by Peruvians of the immense sum of eleven million dollars (£2,250,000) can neither be found in his diary nor in the *Journal of Captain Basil Hall, R.N.*, who was on duty on the coast of Peru from 1820 to 1823, and it seems impossible for so interesting and important an event to have escaped their notice. Moreover, despite Admiral Palliser's asseverations, I have never met any inhabitant of Lima who has ever discovered any reference to the lost millions, or to the *Mary Read's* mutiny, in the historical records of Peru, neither is any allusion made to the story in Stevenson's *Twenty Years' residence in South America* (3 volumes), published in 1829.

Peru was at war again in 1835, this time against Bolivia; but Sir Clement Markham, who has written an exhaustive history of Peru in those days, makes no mention of any mutiny causing loss to Peru of so vast a treasure.

There can be no doubt whatever that many treasure-seeking expeditions to Cocos Island have been undertaken on faked clues made up from works of fiction, more especially from the United States of America; indeed, I myself have known of more than one of such frauds. Besides, a gold-finding implement was used on one of these expeditions, after being widely advertised, which was described to me by an engineer as undoubtedly a dud instrument which could no more detect the presence of gold than that of herrings' roes! I am given to understand that any effective gold-finding instrument must be a heavy engine weighing not less than three tons, difficult, if not impossible, to shift about in the surroundings likely to be encountered on Cocos Island.



However that may be, in about the year 1844 a man of the name of Keating found his way to Cocos Island and undoubtedly brought away some two thousand pounds' worth of money in gold, both Spanish pieces of eight and English guineas: there is evidence from many sources that the coins were seen in Keating's possession. Now, Admiral Palliser was working on a clue furnished by an old seaman Nicholas Fitzgerald, which had been obtained from Keating's widow, but Keating was notoriously a bad character. He claimed to have befriended a certain Thompson, when the latter was a fugitive from justice in Newfoundland; now Thompson's name has a way of cropping up in almost every tale about Cocos Island and its treasure: he may have been one of the chief mutineers on the *Mary Read*, or the mate of the *Relampago*, the pirate Benito's ship.

Keating had set out on his one voyage in search of the treasure with a certain Captain Bogue, but Bogue never returned. Howbeit, during the rest of his life Keating, although eager to dispose of clues for money or a share in the profits of any expedition, could never be induced to go back to the island; and as no expedition, working on Keating's information, has ever discovered anything, two surmises have been made: it has been suggested that Keating killed Bogue in the treasure-cave; that Bogue's murdered body still lies there, amidst the statues of the Holy Virgin, the gold ingots, and the jewels, and will be seen whenever the treasure is found, damning evidence against Keating; secondly, it may be, that Keating himself never actually discovered the cave, but that Bogue was murdered and robbed by him while bearing some of the gold away from the cache; if so, the secret must have died with Bogue. Either Keating thought it to be in his interest to put every expedition off the scent, or else he was himself ignorant of the cave's locality. Thompson may have been Bogue's real friend, and a stranger to Keating, whose stories and clues may have been

based on his imagination: this, indeed, is what I shrewdly suspect.

Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory nature of the available evidence, by the summer of 1903 we had succeeded in collecting sufficient pecuniary support to enable us to finance our adventure.

Admiral Palliser came with us, but Gray was kept in England by the sudden death of a near relation; nevertheless, our party consisted of seven treasure-seekers all agog for the romantic exploit. We had chartered the tramp-steamer *Lytton* to carry cement to Salina Cruz, a harbour under construction on the Pacific coast of Mexico, it being agreed that, after the delivery of her cargo to the contractor, the ship was to be at our disposal for a month to carry us to and from our goal.

To what strange, divers uses may the humblest vessel come! When she glided down the slips at her launching, the *Lytton's* romantic destiny could not have been anticipated. After taking part in our treasure-hunt, she was wrecked on the Mexican coast, and, on being refloated, sailed for the East, where, one never-to-be-forgotten night, she was driven by the valiant Japanese manning her through a hurricane of fire, and sunk in the mouth of Port Arthur, thus accomplishing a very heroic achievement and sealing the enemy's harbour.

By the end of June, taking different routes, our company had assembled in Mexico City and were impatiently awaiting the notice of the *Lytton's* arrival at Salina Cruz.

Mexico City is a place of interest by reason of its history and modern development. When we arrived there in the summer of 1903, the Mexicans had enjoyed some five and twenty years of stable government under President Diaz, who, by despotic, and perhaps corrupt, methods, had contrived to retain power in his hands for a generation – it is said that the accounts of the voting papers in the electoral urns were always cooked during a presidential election. It

may be doubted, however, whether the Mexican civilisation were ever more than a thin veneer, as the Mexican Indian preserves a bitter mistrust of the white man – who is usually the top dog – derived from the Aztecs' hatred of the Conquistadores and Jesuits who used to torture and oppress them.

Mexico City, which stands some 7,500 feet above the sea-level, is dominated by two volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, meaning 'the smoky mountain' and 'the sleeping woman' in the Aztec language. It is a beautiful city, possessing an avenue of statues, with the brave figure of Cuatemoc at one end; he wears the feathers of a Red Indian on his crest and back and holds a tomahawk aloft, as if to hurl defiance at the foes of his country. At the other end of the avenue is the image of Charles IV, King of Spain; on the plinth of Charles's statue is printed a notification that 'the people of Mexico preserve this statue as a work of art, but have no respect for the original.'

Like all South Americans, the Mexicans are deeply religious, but their Catholic faith has retained many elements of the old, savage beliefs of the Aztecs or Toltecs, who, before conversion to Christianity, used to practise the horrid, cruel rites of cannibalism as an act of faith, and human sacrifices were offered up to Huitzilopochtli or Quetzalcohuatl, their gods of war and of the shining shield. At Guadalupe in Mexico and at Cuzco in Peru there are black Christs on the cross, and there are many black images of the Holy Virgin, but all, strange to say, are rather of the negro than of the Red Indian type. The Mexicans adore these figures of the Virgin, whose clothing is usually stiff with precious stones; it is a common thing to see, within the precincts of a Mexican church or cathedral, some poor woman, who has beggared herself to give pearls, rubies, and diamonds to the Virgin's image, herself soliciting alms and dressed in rags.

The Mexicans, like all South Americans, are addicted to drugs, and distil *aguardiente* from sugar-cane or maize; they also make a drink from the cactus called *pulque*. In South

America, the Aymara or Quechua Indians are eternally chewing coca leaves, or smoking *marihuana* mixed with their tobacco, which gives it the effect of opium, while the Cholos, or half-castes, imitate the Indians.

All Mexicans are mad about hats; the poor peons, who are half slaves, will involve themselves in perpetual debt to purchase on credit an extravagant conical head-dress, and the richer Mexicans all possess Panama hats for which they have paid £100 or more. Panama hats are not made in Panama, but in Northern Peru or Ecuador; the best are manufactured in Catacaos, in Ecuador; their quality depends on the selection and preparation of the fibre which grows in the low swamp-land along the coast, and they are woven under water.

Before starting on our expedition, I had taken the precaution to secure a concession to explore and work on Cocos Island from the Costa Rican Government; this had been granted to me personally, in exchange for an undertaking to pay the Government twenty-five per cent of any profit from our researches.

After many vexatious delays, we started at last by rail from Mexico City. From Esperanza, on the edge of the central Mexican plateau, the train in thirty miles or so runs down 4,000 feet into the Tierra Caliente, passing through the most wonderful mountain scenery in the world. Our first night was spent at Cordoba, where we had to change on to the Santa Cruz and Pacific line. Cordoba is on the slopes of Mount Orizaba, whose snow-capped peak, glittering like a huge jewel, rises above the sublimely beautiful forest. Never have I seen such a wealth of wild flowers – great bells of bright scarlet and purple dangling amidst impenetrable undergrowth – or such butterflies dancing in rhythm to the music of the fairies, which no mortal can hear, flashing across the sunbeams in the open glades, vanishing into deep shadows as dark as night beneath the dense foliage; just as,

of old, some sweet priestess of Astarte may have lured her votaries into the sacred groves.

For sixteen hours on the following day we lurched and bumped over the unballasted track of the newly constructed railroad through the tropical forest, bathed in perspiration, devoured by mosquitoes, which pursued us in clouds, until at midnight we arrived at Perrez, where we spent a night of horror, sleepless on stretchers in a mephitic doss-house kept by a Chinese for coolies. Long before dawn, however, I was so restless and fearful of missing the connection to the Pacific that I determined to pick my way along the path over the swamp to the railway by the light of flashes of tropical lightning fitfully playing across the sky. I accordingly rose and clambered down the ladder-like stairs to the veranda; there I stumbled and fell over what had the appearance of a bundle of blankets; I hurt myself considerably, and was swearing and rubbing my shin, when without a sound the Chinese rest-house keeper appeared, swinging a smoky, stinking lantern and blinking at me from his slits of eyes.

'What the devil do you mean by leaving that bale there in everyone's way?' I roared.

'That not a bale,' he quietly remarked. 'That a dead man.'

I recoiled in horror. 'When did he die?' I enquired.

'An hour ago, please, boss; he die of smallpox!' resumed the celestial.

It is impossible to describe my feelings of horror: my blood froze within me. Nevertheless, I limped to the end of the balcony, sat down in a rocking-chair, and turned the matter carefully over in my mind. There was only one train a week from Perrez, so that, if my companions were to decide that I carried contagion and must be isolated, I ran the risk of being marooned on that accursed swamp for many days – alone, abandoned to unknown misery, perhaps to sickness and death. I decided to say nothing, and steelled myself to adopt

a cheerful demeanour while we all drank our morning coffee. For weeks afterwards I spent an anxious time : I used to wake in the night and wonder if the heat and thirst I was suffering were the incipient symptoms of the most hideous of all diseases.

At Santa Lucrezia, a day's journey from Perrez, we changed on to Messrs. Pearson's Tehuantepec railroad, which, then under construction, was destined to link the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean across the isthmus of Tehuantepec. We had had a very trying journey from Córdoba, and it was an intense relief to find ourselves at Santa Lucrezia, as the breakdown of our engine on the way through the Tierra Calliente would have left us castaways, starving in the midst of swamps infested with mosquitoes, which are not seldom the hosts of yellow or malarial fever germs.

Our new engine was in charge of an American who might have filled the rôle of hero in the latest Hollywood film, had there been films in those days. He wore a Stetson hat, gauntlets, and a revolver – the latter very handily slung – and he was a persuasive man with a locomotive; it was a puzzle to know what he, an engine-driver and a gentleman, could be doing there; but he had probably been in trouble in what every exile from the United States knows as 'God's own country' !

We travelled in a caboose, seated on packing-cases, along with the conductor; he, a Leeds man, attributed his own 'Irish' rise to an affair in which a Yankee had fumbled in drawing his 'gun' – the most fatal of all mistakes, according to Bret Harte, conductors from Leeds, and all the best authorities ! The Jehu of our iron horse took us across the isthmus at a speed which must have startled butterflies, Mexican Indians, and other wayside residents; he dashed through the narrow streets of Tehuantepec rattling past the houses and fluttering the very muslin curtains of the bedrooms. An interesting town, Tehuantepec, to all except

impatient treasure-hunters, giddy with expectations, on the very brink of success or failure.

Two hours before sunset, the mountains seemed to fall apart and reveal to us Salina Cruz, the Pacific Ocean, and – at last – the *Lytton* anchored off a half-built mole, with lighters and boats bobbing about her like chicks around an old hen. The rain came down in torrents as our train glided on to the wharf. Outside Messrs. Pearson's offices, a funeral *cortège* was drawn up to escort the latest victim of that stern old buccaneer, 'Yellow Jack,' on his last journey. The tropical deluge was drenching seven hungry, dirty treasure-seekers who, during the previous sixty hours, had only eaten a single meal, and since their departure from Cordoba had not been able to enjoy a wash or a shave; but they were seven light-hearted, triumphant men, notwithstanding, for were they not the first travellers who had succeeded in winning their way to Salina Cruz from Mexico City, and was not a cutter, manned by some of the *Lytton's* crew, rapidly approaching the shore?

In wishing us godspeed, our friend the driver of our engine remarked: 'I hope you may find treasure: do you think you will? As for me, the only little treasures I have ever found were most damnably expensive ones; I am paying for some of them now, working here!'

'We hope so,' laughed the spokesman of our party; 'but how did you know we were after treasure?'

'Oh, we all know the *Lytton* is bound for Cocos Island, and no one goes there for any other purpose. Anyhow, good luck to you!'

And so this cheery, breezy, handsome fellow slipped out of our lives, as so many characters slip into the world of shadows and memories.

When the *Lytton* was hove short on her cable, it was found that her anchor had fouled and this caused some delay, but before dark her propeller was moving and we were heading for Cocos Island. Was it to be Tom Tiddler's

ground, or Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard? That was the question.

On the fifth day at sea, just before sunrise, a dark mass of land was distinguishable right ahead. As the sun rose, the mass changed from grey to purple, from purple to less neutral tints, and Cocos Island, with lofty peak, upstanding cliffs, and thick, tropical vegetation, was displaying its beauty to our admiring eyes. The interior, thickly covered with forest, seemed to undulate in billows of dark green foliage from the summit of Mount Iglesias to the very edge of the bold promontory of Colnett Point, where a sheer wall of bare rock stood up against the thundering Pacific rollers, like a rampart defying invasion: a sea of forest above and an ocean of waters below.

So dense is the growth of the trees that from a distance they appear like moss upon a stone; but a closer inspection reveals some splendid individual specimens towering above their fellows. In their branches, orchids nestle in abundance, while from clefts of their upper limbs a strange parasite, a liana, often dangles like a plumb-line towards the earth; these parasites are murderous guests, for they grow longer and longer and stouter and stouter, until, as thick as hawsers, they finally reach the ground, where they take root and themselves grow into trees, waxing stronger to clasp their hosts in mortal embrace, from which deadly strangle-hold there is no reprieve. From out of the forest which carpets the summit of the cliffs, here and there, cascades of fresh water leap off the crest and tumble right on to the beach far below: one of these, with a considerable volume of water, falls from a height of over two hundred feet with a roar and a cloud of spray into two immense stone basins polished smooth, and round, amidst the rough boulders and shingle of the shore; viewed from far out at sea, this cascade is a superb sight when the sun glints upon it, for it shines like a solid pillar of silver.

In Chatham Bay we cast anchor in thirty fathoms of water

as clear as crystal. Startled by the splash, flocks of birds arose screaming from the land and circled above and around us in myriads, darkening the air with their vast numbers and settling on the rails and spars of our ship, tamer than the pigeons of St. Paul's Churchyard! Gannets were the most numerous, but high above in the empyrean, with wings stretched stiff and bellying like the royals of a clipper before the wind, the stately frigate-bird, wheeling and balancing himself by means of his long, forked swallow-tail, was for ever on the watch for some unwary gannet with a freshly caught meal; for the frigate-bird is a pirate which lives by plunder, as he dare not catch fish for himself, nor even venture to enter the water, not having webbed feet.

Beneath the surface of the sea could be seen the strangest, most beautiful sea-monsters and fish, crawling or darting to and from caverns of coral and sponge. Scientists recognise Cocos Island as about the richest spot in the world in variety of marine specimens.

Enormous sharks, dull green on their backs, but whose bellies flashed white as they twisted and turned and dived, poked their snouts at the *Lytton's* sides with impertinent tameness, while now and then a giant skate, as broad as two ordinary blankets,¹ and more evil in appearance than any shark, would flap across the surface of the sea.

To the north is a detached rock described on the chart as Nuez, or Breakfast Island, which bears an extraordinary resemblance to a sphinx. Between this rock and another small islet off the north-east point of Cocos there are thirty fathoms of water, the sea is as clear as crystal and its bottom firm and sandy, affording excellent anchor-ground; these two islets, three-quarters of a mile apart, form the lugs of Chatham Bay, which runs inland for half a mile or more, narrowing itself into a creek with a pleasant, sandy beach. Wafer Bay, to the north-west of the island, does not yield

¹ In the Sailing Instructions reference is made to a giant ray or skate caught in these waters, which was 45 inches thick!

such good anchorage, there being many shoals and submerged rocks. Chatham and Wafer Bays are the only two possible landing-places, the rest of the coast being inhospitable, dangerous, and fringed with very heavy surf.

At 8 a.m. seven impatient treasure-seekers clambered down the companion-ladder, and two minutes later the cutter was heading for the strip of sand at the head of Chatham Bay, her crew bending to their work with zeal. Startled birds, so unaccustomed to the sight of man as to be devoid of fear, wheeled about our heads or actually perched on the oars. We had gone barely half way when someone cried out: 'Why, we are thirteen !' And so we were.

But, if our modern buccaneer be superstitious, he has neither a long memory nor low spirits, so, as the keel of our boat grated upon the coral and sand, we vaulted over the gunwale and waded up the shore as merry as grigs.

The beach at which we landed is strewn with large boulders; the old sea-salt is notoriously fond of carving his name, or that of his ship, on any soft stone which may come to hand while he is idling on the seashore; and he has practised this talent with industry on these boulders. Some of the dates carry one back to Nelson's days: men-o'-war, whalers, and pirates appear to have made this deserted spot a place for watering and careening their ships.

The high-water mark is sharply defined by the cessation of growing shrubs and trees, also by a line of rotting vegetation cast up by the rising tide; the coco-nut palms on the shore waved their feathery fronds and curtsied solemnly to us: perhaps in welcome, perhaps in mockery ! To our right, a turtle shuffled down the sands and flopped into the sea, and a few yards to our left, quite unconcerned, a pelican was pluming herself, dancing up and down and puffing herself out with grotesque gestures, as if we did not exist.

Within ten minutes of setting foot on land, we had pitched our tent, spread out our stores and implements, while the

crew of the cutter were busy climbing trees and smashing open coco-nuts.

Our clue ran as follows :

In the north or north-east of Cocos Island, there is a creek ; go to the bottom of that creek and, from the high-water mark, with a compass in your hand, measure twenty fathoms due west, then turn to the north, when you will perceive a rock rising like a cliff ; walk on to it ; there, at the height of a man's shoulder, you will notice a hole into which one might put one's thumb. With a crow-bar inserted in this hole, you can lever out the rock which closes up the cave. In the cave you will find coins, jewels, gold-bars and a life-size statue of the Virgin in solid gold.

Now certain difficulties and ambiguities presented themselves to us as soon as we endeavoured to interpret this information in a practical manner. I will enumerate them in order as they occur in studying the text.

(i) To all Latins, O - *ouest* - stands for west ; to all Dutchmen, O - *oest* - stands for east ; thus, in the course of the many translations of the original papers, errors may have crept in : north-east may be north-west, and west may be really east ; so that it is possible to read the clue backwards, as far as compass-directions are concerned.

(ii) What is a creek ?

To an Australian or an American a creek is a river ; to others it is a small bay or an arm of the sea.

(iii) What exactly is the bottom of the creek ?

Is it the point farthest inland or the nearest to the sea ?

(iv) What is the length of a fathom ?

In the old ships, where a twenty-eight-seconds' glass was used, the fathoms on the log-line were only five feet two inches in length ; the ordinary fathom, of course, is six feet long.

While contemplating the possibility of lifting the treasure, said to be worth eleven million dollars (£2,250,000), it may be as well to consider the following points : one million pounds of gold sterling contain about 7 tons and 4 cwt. of

pure gold, and, with their alloy, should weigh over 7 tons and 17 cwt. Thus I have calculated from the facts that a gold sovereign weighs 123·27447 grains troy and contains eleven-twelfths of its weight in pure gold.¹ Thus we hoped to find a fairly bulky mass of treasure – over 16 tons – occupying a considerable space when packed in portable sacks or cases: a solid block of pure gold weighing 16 tons would be about 32 or 33 cubic feet in volume.

In Cocos Island so dense is the undergrowth that one can only advance slowly and laboriously, hacking one's way with a machete through tangled meshes of lianas and coils of vines as tough as cables, crawling on hands and knees over the boulders or logs of dead timber with which the ground is bestrewn; it is impossible to walk anywhere; so it came about that in order to penetrate inland and pace or measure twenty fathoms we found it necessary to wade up the bed of some stream. Now there are no less than six or seven rivulets which flow into Chatham Bay from the west.

During the next fortnight we carefully and systematically explored all these water-courses, and in one only did we find ground to the north rising like a cliff, but this had been covered, by a succession of avalanches, with thousands of tons of soil, huge boulders and trunks of dead trees washed down by the mountain-torrents to such a depth as to be impervious to the means at our command, or in the time at our disposal: beneath that mound of earth which formed the northern bank of the stream there might lie the cave we were seeking, but in any case, it lay beyond our reach. From the mouth of this brook, moreover, the opposite lug of Chatham Bay bears one point – eleven and a quarter degrees of arc – north of east. Now this may be a paraphrase of a reading which comes into many of the Cocos Island clues: one point east of north.

We discussed the situation from every point of view, and a

¹ These calculations were made when sterling was on the gold standard and one ounce troy of gold was worth £3 17s. 10½d.

general reconnaissance of the north-eastern coast of the island was made. There is a strange-looking tunnel, which pierces through the headland protecting Wafer Bay from the north. Through this a boat might be rowed. We never ventured to make the experiment, however, as we feared that the never-abating, heavy swell of the Pacific might crush our dinghy against the roof, even at low tide. The lofty cliffs facing Breakfast Island are of bare rock, and are honeycombed with caves which must in their day have been as inaccessible to the pirates seeking a *câche* for their spoils as they were for us, because the angry surf beating upon the rocky shore forbade the approach of the most intrepid soul in any craft, at any tide or at any season. Besides, the bluff could hardly have been scaled by a monkey.

It was on the 23rd of August that, having abandoned all hope of succeeding in our quest, we weighed anchor and sailed for Panama. Hauling round Breakfast Island, we steamed across Wafer Bay, the more westerly of the two great arms of the sea which give access to Cocos Island, whose rock-bound coast-line is otherwise so inhospitable and forbidding; there we observed several huts which once had formed the convict-station maintained by the Costa Rican Government for some years. No signs of life whatever were perceived, although we carefully searched the shore and the woods behind with our field-glasses and telescopes.

We reached Panama, after four days' steaming, to find the place in a political ferment. In 1903 the negotiations for the purchase of the right to complete the construction of the canal had reached a deadlock between Uncle Sam and the Colombian Government, whose seat was at Santa Fé de Bogotá, situated in the valley of the Magdalena River, beyond a mighty spur of the impenetrable Cordillera, inaccessible overland and separated from Panama by a journey, by trains and steamboats, requiring many weeks:

across the isthmus, the Gulf of Darien, through Barranquilla, and up the Magdalena River.

Now Panama in those days was a mere province of Colombia; and it was borne in upon the local politicians that a canal in being would bring wealth and prosperity to the city and province, and that the sooner it came into being, the better. Moreover, the brave burghers of Panama gravely doubted whether any of Uncle Sam's dollars, paid to the Colombians in Bogotá, so remote in distance and sympathy, might ever reach their pockets.

A party arose, accordingly, which purposed erecting the standard of revolt, and negotiating directly with the United States, after having proclaimed the independence of Panama as a sovereign State. This revolution, which served abruptly to end the procrastination in the negotiations being carried on in Bogotá, suited Uncle Sam to the letter, and was eventually carried to a successful issue with a minimum of bloodshed: the United States battleships in tremendous force demonstrating at each end of the canal – at Panama on the Pacific and at Colon on the Atlantic – to protect American interests.

It was during the early stages of this revolution that we, in the *Lytton*, arrived off Panama. So preoccupied were the brave Panamanians in demonstrating, marching, haranguing, and being harangued, that the port authorities had ceased to function, and we found no difficulty in passing unchallenged through all customs and quarantine barriers.

This little footnote to history which comprises the Independence of Panama sparkles with many episodes worthy of *opéra bouffe*. The Colombian Government requested the officials of the Panama Railway – which was then a chartered American company – to transport their troops across the isthmus from Colon for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion. The company's manager agreed, but, referring to an old law passed half a century previously to protect gold convoys coming from the goldfields of California against

armed raiders, pronounced it to be illegal for any of the Colombian soldiers to carry arms on the railway.

Admiral Palliser, Dormer, and I, being anxious to visit the French West Indies, took passage by the *Canada* of the Compagnie Transatlantique, while the rest of our company found their way home through New York. At Fort de France, Martinique, by courtesy of the harbour authorities, who desired to pay a compliment to an English admiral, we were given special permission and facilities to visit the ruins of St. Pierre, which had been destroyed by a volcanic eruption some fifteen months previously. I believe we were the first strangers to visit St. Pierre after the disaster, as the inhabitants of the entire island were still living in a state of abject terror, because Mont Pelée was still smoking and occasionally belching up fumes of the deadly hot, yellow gas which had brought instant death to 35,000 people.

I have lived since to see greater devastation wrought by shells and bombs in the Great War; but at St. Pierre de Martinique the sights which met our astonished eyes were appalling and fantastic. A deathly, fearsome silence reigned in the deserted streets; weeds had even begun to force their way through the ashes, which were spread everywhere like a thin carpet of snow. Skeletons of human beings, cats, dogs, and horses still lay on the pavements and roadways, or might be seen through open windows, or gaps in the walls of houses, in every attitude, just as death had caught them unawares in the midst of their daily tasks some fifteen months previously. The commonest domestic scenes could be reconstructed from the positions in which the corpses were fortuitously disposed; thus one could recognise how and where the serving-maid, waiting on the doorstep, had been standing, dish in hand, to receive delivery of the daily joint from the hands of the butcher, whose calcined cart was drawn up at the curb-stone, what time the dog, the house-pet, had barked and gambolled around the butcher's pony.

There was everywhere evidence of the terrific heat of the gas-squall which had been belched from the crater, and of its force: the glass of windows having melted and flowed over the window-sills, had re-congealed, so that it hung like icicles; piles of pence on counters had been softened and then solidified into columns of bronze; wine-glasses had collapsed, fused into vitreous lumps or discs, and the wrought iron railings on the square were twisted into the strangest contortions. The coloured boatmen, who had escorted us from Fort de France and were holding the launch, with steam up, by boat-hooks to the side of the mournful, deserted wharf, kept exhorting us with loud cries to hasten back, pointing in fear at the glittering stream of molten lava flowing from the lip of the crater direct to the sea. Indeed, an atmosphere of horror pervaded the place, and I confess to a feeling of intense relief when we found ourselves once more in the hospitable cabin of the *Canada*, on our way to Bordeaux.

On my arrival in London, I found that Harold Gray had purchased an auxiliary steam yacht, the *Rosmarine*, a vessel of some two hundred tons burthen, and was all agog to sail for Cocos Island in the autumn. He was quite undeterred by my rather pessimistic report of the fruitless results of our search, and insisted on regarding our expedition in the *Lytton* as merely a preliminary reconnaissance. He expressed his determination to hire labour in Costa Rica and to tunnel into the bank formed by the landslides which we had located, believing that the treasure-cache must lie under the tons of soil, rocks, and logs which I have described on the steep, northern bank of the little stream flowing into Chatham Bay. Moreover, he had received some supplementary information regarding the treasure, which increased his confidence in the whole proposition.

CHAPTER XI

SECOND EXPEDITION TO COCOS ISLAND

In dim, green depths rot ingot-laden ships
While gold doubloons that from the drowned hand fell
Lie nestled in the ocean's flower bell
With Love's gemmed rings once kissed by now dead lips.
EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

THE fresh information concerning the treasure had come from the River Plate. After we had sailed in the *Lytton*, an ex-seaman, named Alexander Jack, employed as a stationmaster in the Argentine, had written to ask if he might join our expedition. As a young man, he had been shipmates in the Pacific Steam Navigation Company with a certain Bob Flower, who had shown him gold coins which he had found in a cave on Cocos Island, while pearl-fishing there in a schooner manned by Dagos, from whom he had concealed his treasure trove. Flower and Jack had arranged to hire a small sailing vessel, which the two could navigate, and go to Cocos at the close of the war between Chile and Peru, in which both had taken part; but Flower had been drowned in one of the sea-battles; nevertheless, before his death, he had roughly indicated to Jack on a sketch-map the whereabouts of the cave.

This information appearing to be of value, I determined to travel to San Patricio on the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway, interview Jack, and invite him to accompany me to Valparaiso, where we could join the *Rosmarine* on her cruise to Cocos Island.

The journey to be faced was a formidable one for a yacht of two hundred tons burthen, for she had to sail across the Atlantic and along the east coast of South America on the trade wind, beat her way through the Strait of Magellan

against the 'westerlies,' then shape her course northwards, past Coronel, Valparaiso, and Callao, to Panama, where she was to await the arrival of her owner and his friends from England. The *Rosmarine* had only a small auxiliary engine of five and twenty horse-power, nevertheless, she had already demonstrated her sea-worthiness in a voyage in the Arctic Ocean. When she left Southampton, in October 1903, her decks were heavily laden with coal, and she encountered terrific gales in the Channel. She held bravely on her course, notwithstanding, calling at St. Vincent and Pernambuco for supplies of food and fuel. She was blown back into the Strait of Magellan three times, and when she finally fought her way out into the Pacific, riding over mountainous seas, she was loudly cheered by the passengers and crew of a passing liner of ten thousand tons, and she eventually reached Panama on St. Valentine's Day, the 14th of February, 1904.

I myself landed at Monte Video, and, taking a river steamer, arrived at Buenos Aires early in January, 1904. At San Patricio, my interview with Alexander Jack inspired me with renewed confidence: he showed me a well-thumbed letter, thirty years old, from a bank manager of Valparaiso, referring to certain ancient Spanish coins which his bank had bought from a Mr. Flower. Jack also marked a point on the tracing of a map of Cocos Island where he believed the cave to be situated. Now this point almost exactly coincided with the bank of a stream in Chatham Bay where we purposed making excavations. Jack's employers spoke highly of his character, and granted him six months' leave to accompany us on our treasure-hunt.

On the morrow, we took train for Valparaiso. In those days the rail-head was at Puente del Inca in the Andes, and there we spent the night. After a plunge in the hot spring, which bubbles up like champagne in a basin in the rocks, we continued our journey, on mule-back, at dawn on the following day, over the pass, about 13,000 feet above the sea, into Chile. Never have I enjoyed such a view! By

the noble statue of Christ, which stands blessing all comers, I stood entranced, gazing upon the lofty peak of Aconcagua which glittered like a monster diamond in the sun; overhead in the empyrean a condor was wheeling in graceful circles, swift, fierce, and bold! Not a cloud was in sight.

On descending into Chile, we passed the Lago del Inca, a pool of melted snow as blue as a delphinium, and followed the course of the Aconcagua River, which, commencing as a tiny stream, grows rapidly into a mighty torrent, and thunders through the gorge at Salto del Soldato, where we rejoined the train.

The Andino lads, galloping on horseback down the precipitous slopes of the mountains on their way to market, a live fowl tucked under each arm, are not mere men on horses: they are veritable centaurs!

At Valparaiso we rejoined the *Rosmarine*, and by the 21st of February I was once more in sight of Cocos Island. Breakfast Island, sphinx-like, was still guarding the secret of the treasure, and rain was falling in torrents. I believe the rainfall at Cocos to be one of the heaviest in the world: it certainly exceeds two hundred inches in a year, and work in the rainy season is quite out of the question.

During the silent watches of the night, as we lay on deck under the awnings, we used to hear the crash and roar of landslides, caused by the mountain torrents undermining banks, uprooting trees, and displacing boulders, and we grew to understand how the natural features of the island must be continually and rapidly changing.

As the sage old seaman, the master of our yacht, used to declare: 'Even the mutineers themselves mightn't find their booty now!'

As being nearer than Panama, we had selected for our base on the mainland, Punta Arenas, the Pacific port of Costa Rica in the Gulf of Nicoya; there we had picked up Gray and engaged the native labour we required, so our first task on reaching Cocos Island was to form a camp on

shore for the boys, our next to set them on their work of excavating the bank behind which we hoped to find the treasure-cave.

During the many weeks which these operations occupied, and in the intervals of directing and supervising them, we had leisure to visit other parts of the island. Soon after breakfast, on our first Sunday, accordingly, we lowered the steam-pinnace, packed her with supplies, and started out with the intention of picnicking in Wafer Bay. As we steamed past the rocky promontory forming the northernmost point of Cocos, we opened up a small bight, where the more gentle contours of the hill commanding it give a better view of the interior. Casting my eyes inland, what was my amazement to see a thin column of smoke rising straight up into the cloudless sky !

‘Look, look !’ I exclaimed. ‘The island is inhabited !’

‘Friday’s’ footprint in the sand can hardly have caused Robinson Crusoe greater surprise than this smoke did to us on board the *Rosmarine’s* launch, and our excitement was intense while rounding the cape which hid Wafer Bay from our view. At that state of the tide, we were able to peer right through the tunnel which is such a remarkable feature of this headland – but, only when the swell of the huge Pacific rollers permitted.

On opening up Wafer Bay, the pleasant valley, wherein stood the huts of the old convict-settlement, came into view, and we immediately descried two dogs upon the shore, running to and fro, also the forms of two men and a woman. As we steamed across the bay towards a creek sheltered by palm-trees, the Costa Rican colours fluttered to the top of a flagstaff, while one of the three figures, a tall man, with a beard flowing to his waist, waded into the sea up to his middle, and signalled to us, by waving his arm, the best point for landing. As our engine slowed down and the pinnace came to a stop in the mouth of a considerable stream which flowed between sandy banks into the sea, the stranger,

grasping the gunwale, said, in broken English, with an American accent: 'My name is Gissler; I suppose you have come to look for treasure?'

Off and on for fifteen years, August Gissler had made Cocos Island his home, and, with his wife and a peon, for two years had been living there without seeing another human creature. In the old days of sailing-ships, vessels frequently called for water, but in modern times steamers give Cocos a wide berth. And although the President of Costa Rica, having appointed Gissler governor of the island, promised to send his gunboat once a year on a visit of inspection, it was a promise more honoured in the breach than the observance.

Gissler had exhausted his supplies of all sorts when we arrived; but he felt the need of flour beyond all else. Fire he could always propagate with flint and steel or a magnifying-glass, but he found it more practicable to maintain logs continually burning on a hearth in a corrugated-iron hut hard by his own bungalow which, to insure cooler, pleasanter living conditions, was built of wood and thatched with palm-leaves.

Coffee, tobacco, bananas, limes, pineapples, beans, maniocs, and sweet potatoes, most of which had been originally cultivated in the convict-settlement, were growing in the pleasant valley where this latter-day Crusoe had made his home, but he was passing through an anxious time on account of insect-pests which threatened to destroy his crops. Coco-nut palms, of course, flourished; chiefly on the southern coast of the island, however, which was almost inaccessible to Gissler. Pigs, the descendants of the domestic swine left on the island by navigators in early days, roamed wild all over the forest, and they supplied him with the favourite article of his food. Gissler and his wife, indeed, acquired such a taste for pork that once, years afterwards, when I entertained them to dinner at Gatti's in the Strand, where a varied bill of fare was presented to them, out of

a long list of the choicest viands, the Gisslers selected pork chops !

But a plague of flies rendered life almost insupportable in his homestead ; never anywhere in the world, except perhaps in the camps during the Boer War, have I seen such swarms ; and unfortunately, some of them, having attached themselves to us, were borne to the *Rosmarine*, and there founded a new colony to tease us beyond endurance. The Cocos Island fly is the most prolific in the universe, and whenever we killed one, two more arrived to attend his funeral.

Gissler was a man of resource and invention, who turned all the products of the island to his uses : from coco-nuts, he made oil for his lamps, and from their fibre many articles. A particularly useful tree, the *bombax fera*, furnished him with brushes, brooms, and ropes ; its juice, too, produces tannic acid, and with this he was able to make ink, and to tan the hides of pigs into leather for the repair of his boots. Once, this remarkable man, from the timber of trees felled by himself, built a boat, in which he sailed alone to the mainland, her ropes being woven from fibre and her sails improvised from the sheets of his bed – for, with a queer yearning for the minor luxuries of civilisation, he always slept between sheets.

A vision of the ideal, romantic adventurer is evoked by this intrepid sailor afloat in mid-ocean on his frail bark, fighting the elements day by day, night after night, during his long voyage to the coast ; his fingers cramped upon the tiller, his anxious eyes straining to pierce the darkness. The iron grip of his strong hand, and the sharp, suspicious glance from his deep-set eyes revealed Gissler's determination and independent spirit.

His people were paper manufacturers in Lübeck, who longed for August's return – a post being always kept open for him in the factory – but he was of a wandering, improvident temperament, and had run away at an early age to

seek adventures. Not once or twice only had the fatted calf been prepared for this prodigal's return, but he could not bear to be pointed at as a failure in his own town, so always departed again after a brief visit.

It was in the Sandwich Islands that he had first heard of the Cocos Island treasure. A man who passed under the name of Old Mack used to throw dice with him, for drinks, at the drug-store; now some said Old Mack had been a pirate, and everyone believed that he knew where treasure was hidden. During the bad times in Hawaii, when the sugar-planters were failing by the dozen, Gissler and Old Mack agreed to make an attempt for the prize, and, selling all they possessed, went to Punta Arenas in Costa Rica. On the first day after their arrival, they were sitting in the hotel near the beach, when they were accosted by two Englishmen who begged for a job.

'Where have you been?' enquired Gissler.

'On an expedition,' replied the strangers, shamefacedly.

'What, smuggling?'

'No, greater folly than that: treasure-hunting on Cocos Island!'

Gissler, who, with his strong will and many abilities, might have attained almost any success in life, was caught by the fascination of treasure-seeking, and held by the fatal spell, as a gambler is held by the lure of the tables or a drug-taker by opium; he spent his life seeking for the robbed treasures of Peru, and when he died, many years after the Great War, he was scheming and planning how to get back to Cocos Island.

How we gained his confidence would take much patience to tell. He never liked me, hating my impatience, critical scepticism, and what my schoolmates used to call my coxiness; but Harold Gray's simple, honourable character and singleness of purpose made a gradual impression upon him and won his esteem in the end, so it came about that he confided every secret he had to the owner of the *Rosmarina*,

who spent two or three days ashore with him, being shown all the likely spots which Gissler thought worth while excavating, and being convinced of the extent and value of his information regarding possible gold deposits. Gray then, on his side, undertook to place his yacht and funds at Gissler's disposal for two years, so that all his clues might be exhaustively investigated.

In the meantime, after several months, our work in Chatham Bay revealed no signs whatever of the rock rising like a cliff for which we were searching; indeed, our excavations proved that there could not possibly exist such a cave as our clue described in the bank of that stream; so, it being clear that we were on the wrong tack, all work in that direction was brought to an end. Alexander Jack, too, had proved a grievous disappointment to us; every day for some months he had been landed, soon after breakfast, wherever a boat could venture through the surf, and he used to climb about the northern promontory between Chatham and Wafer Bays; every evening he had returned more and more melancholy at his failure to discover Bob Flower's cache.

The dry season being far advanced, we had only time to dig out one of the likely spots indicated by Gissler; a spot, moreover, of minor importance in his bulky dossier of evidence regarding the hidden treasure. A council of war was then formed to draw up plans for the future: it was decided that, with the exception of Jack, whose destination was Argentina, we should go to England, leaving the *Rosmarine* in charge of the master and engineer at Panama during the season of heavy rains; that early in the autumn Gissler and I should return to Panama, fit out the yacht, engage a dozen labourers for the work on Cocos Island, and start on the task of excavating the 'Jew's Boiler' which, according to our modern Crusoe, was the real prize-packet of all his clues.

After an uneventful summer in England, I returned to Panama in October, passing through New York on the way,

where I picked up Gissler and his wife. In the *Rosmarine* we found Captain Matthews, the master, and Mr. Shepherd, the engineer, very depressed after the wearisome, damp, tropical summer which they had spent lying anchored off La Boca, the mouth of the then half-completed canal at its Pacific end; there can be no doubt that the relaxing climate of Central America is calculated to render the most energetic person flaccid, spineless, and indolent. The *Rosmarine* was simply alive with cockroaches, and our life at the outset was one long battle, with Jeyes' fluid, brooms, and swabs as weapons, against these disgusting insects.

Our crew, all of whom were yachtsmen recruited on the Solent and despatched from England on a Royal Mail steamer, lost no time in mutinying, and I had summarily to discharge them and obtain the help of the Consul, Sir Coventry Mallet, to deport them as seamen dismissed with ignominy.

Mallet was a great figure in Panama in those days, and he and I became fast friends: he had seen the first sod of the famous canal cut by de Lesseps in 1880, and he remained on as British Minister, to see the great waterway thrown open to traffic in 1914.

The French paid a heavy death-toll in the bad old days, when they commenced digging the canal; and to this, the forest of crosses in their cemeteries can bear mournful testimony. In 1905, Uncle Sam, who had experienced the greatest difficulty in persuading the workers he had recruited throughout 'God's Own Country' to remain in the fever-ridden isthmus for more than a few weeks, had embarked on the colossal undertaking of converting the noisome, disease-infected canal zone into a health resort. While the *Rosmarine* was being refitted, I had the good fortune to witness men from the Engineer Corps and the Medical Service of the United States Army planning and organising this great hygienic task. So unhealthy was Panama in 1903, when I first set foot in the town, that my insurance company

notified me that they had suspended the benefits of my life-policy during my sojourn there. When last I spent a few weeks in the isthmus, I found the hotels packed with Americans of the leisured class seeking sunshine during the winter months, just as Europeans go to Monte Carlo to escape the damp, cold, and fogs of more northern latitudes. This amazing achievement of the Americans could never have been brought to a successful issue had it not been discovered during the campaign in Cuba – called by the Dough Boys¹ the Yanko-Spanko War – that both yellow fever and malaria can only be communicated to man through mosquitoes which are the hosts of their germs; so that, when all the mosquitoes have been destroyed, these two deadly diseases must disappear. The hygienic problem thus resolved itself into how to destroy the mosquitoes, and how to render the canal zone mosquito-proof.

First of all, the towns, Colon, on the Atlantic, and Panama, on the Pacific, were paved, given a wholesome fresh water-supply and an efficient scavenging service. Neither stagnant water nor vegetation was allowed within three hundred yards of any human habitation, and, wherever there was water which could not be drained away, crude oil was poured upon its surface, so that the whole isthmus soon stank of paraffin. The houses of all the workers along the entire length of the canal – forty miles – were completely encased in copper wire netting with the smallest possible meshes; and this gave the employees' camps the appearance of being rows of absurd, gigantic bird-cages. Never was work more thoroughly or successfully accomplished!

When Uncle Sam had made the isthmus one of the healthiest spots in the world, not only Americans, but foreigners from every quarter of the globe, attracted by the excellent pay and high standard of living, swarmed to Panama in thousands, and soon an army corps was employed under Colonel Goethals of the Engineer Corps of the United

¹ The American Tommy Atkins.

States Army. Colonel Goethals, to whom I was introduced by Sir Coventry Mallet, most courteously permitted me to accompany him on his tours of inspection, and explained to me his plan of operations. Whereas de Lesseps had originally designed a sea-level passage through the isthmus, the American engineers had finally decided upon a lock-canal. In furtherance of this scheme, the head-waters of the Chagres River were conserved by dams, and a huge barrage was constructed at Gatun across the Chagres Valley, thus a vast lake, fully four hundred square miles in area, was created in the midst of the Isthmus of Panama; this lake being connected with the two oceans by short channels. Ships seeking a passage have to be raised to the level of the lake and lowered again to that of the sea by immense locks.

Colonel Goethals informed me that, having regard to the thousands of unskilled labourers employed by him and the various countries of the world from which they were recruited, he was able to form a pretty good idea of the relative virtues of the men of different nationalities: he regarded the Northern Spaniard as by far the most efficient workman; the West Indian Negro, however, ran him close, but only after he had spent a few months in the American hostels and had waxed healthy and strong on good, regular feeding. The colonel ran through the comparative merits of all whom he employed, then, turning to me with a severe expression, he said: 'I hold England in considerable esteem, nevertheless I regret to say that, in my experience, the Englishman is about the most unsatisfactory of all the hands: he is lazy and always discontented; he never ceases grumbling, and his output of labour is the lowest of all!'

It took about ten days to refit the *Rosmarine*; we then steamed to our base at Punta Arenas, where we engaged about a dozen peons and transported them to Cocos, without much difficulty, before the middle of October 1904. Our

labour-camp on the island was extended and improved, and by the first of November all was ready to commence excavations.

The greatest difficulty, however, in every human enterprise is the human equation; it was this which began the trouble. I have explained that Gissler disliked me; his antipathy had been growing ever since we met in New York. Deprived for so many years of the fleshpots of civilisation, while monarch of all he surveyed on a desert island, it was with the utmost difficulty that he could be torn from them to return to his status of king of shreds and patches. He desired to linger on wherever he might indulge his taste for beer, whiskey, and casting dice in American saloons; so that it had only been by making myself most disagreeable to him and his wife that I had been able to force him away from New York and Panama; as each fresh stage of our journey had been commenced, his protests had grown louder and his fury against me had redoubled. He was at all times provoked to further defiance by his wife, a screeching scold !

He had kept arrogantly proclaiming at Punta Arenas that it was he who was in sole command of the expedition, and that when the *Rosmarine* sailed it should be in his good time and by his orders. At last, with the aid of the master, the cook, and the engineer of the yacht, I had kidnapped Mr. and Mrs. Gissler, when insensible after an orgy of drink, had stowed them in the main cabin, where they had lain like logs, sleeping off the effects of their deep carouse while we were weighing anchor and shaping our course for Cocos.

When, on the fourth day at sea, we had hove in sight of the island, the precious pair, in a state of sulky rage, furious at having been shanghai'd, had demanded, with threats and curses, that we should return to Punta Arenas and put them ashore. This I would not consent to do, so Gissler flatly refused to start on the work, or even to divulge where the 'Jew's Boiler' was situated — a secret which only Harold Gray of our party shared with him.

Fortunately Mr. and Mrs. Gray were due to arrive in Costa Rica early in November; so, having landed the Gisslers in Wafer Bay, we slipped our cable one night and steamed back to the mainland, leaving word that we would return with the owner of the yacht within a fortnight.

After the mutiny of our Solent yachtsmen, Captain Matthews had signed on a couple of seamen in Panama: one had been a sailor in a Spanish man-o'-war, the other was a Corsican who had deserted from a French battleship. These two served us well during the whole duration of our treasure-hunt; but whenever they managed to obtain spirits they became drunk, and when drunk they went mad! Somewhat unwisely, after we had disembarked our peons and the Gisslers, Captain Matthews, in order to make room in his cabin, had shifted a keg of rum into the cook's galley, and this our crew, José and Baptiste, stole after dark, when we were two days' sail from the Gulf of Nicoya. After a sultry night, I was lying stretched on my bunk at dawn, bathed in perspiration, dreaming that I was back once more on the African veld, and that the strange noise I could hear was the howling of savages engaged in a war-dance, when I was suddenly aroused from my slumbers by the engineer, a very old man, bawling down through the hatchway: 'For God's sake, sir, come on deck; they will murder us all!'

I was awake and had leapt up the companion in a few seconds. In the waist of the ship were José, the Spaniard, and Baptiste, the Corsican, facing one another with eyes aflame and clasp-knives in their hands. Balancing themselves with the sailor's instinct upon the slippery, swaying, sloping deck, they dodged and sparred like boxers, each seeking an opening to dart in and slit the other's gizzard. They were snarling, too, like angry cats and, as is always the case throughout the Western hemisphere, each one was casting doubts upon the chastity of the other's female parent.

Seizing an oar, and holding it like a lance in charge under my arm, I hurled myself on the duellists; but just at this moment the *Rosmarine* dipped her nose into the trough of the Pacific swell, and so my impetus was increased. I pitched into José, striking him full on the chest, knocking him head over heels, while I myself crashed into the bulwarks; his knife was dashed from his hands, and, with a scream of rage, surprise and pain, he sank, stunned, into the lee scuppers. Huddled up, bruised and aching, alongside the Spaniard, I still had the presence of mind to kick his knife to the far end of the deck towards Captain Matthews, who, hurrying forward to my assistance, picked it up and flung it overboard.

‘Mind the Frenchman, sir!’ yelled the engineer, who, old man as he was, was striving to tackle Baptiste. The Corsican sailor, dazed with astonishment at the turn events had taken, his eyes hard and staring with drink, was staggering towards me, his knife held well forward menacingly. Propping myself against the side of the yacht, I crouched, and, seeking to secure my balance, waited until he might be within striking distance; when I judged that the time had come I swept my oar round, as one uses a scythe, and literally reaped Baptiste off his feet.

With a roar of triumph, the cook and Captain Matthews flung themselves upon the prostrate Corsican and soon had him bound hand and foot. Scrambling and sliding across the slippery deck, they next tackled José, but he, unconscious from drink and my unexpected onslaught, was easily secured. Feeling mad with rage, I was, metaphorically speaking, licking my bruises when my fury was suddenly turned to laughter. Slowly, and as well as his roped limbs permitted, Baptiste raised himself on to his knees, clasping his hands as if in prayer and gazing up to the sky, tipsily articulating each word, he poured out this supplication: ‘Mother of God! grant me strength and help me to kill José, because he has insulted my mother!’ By the time we had arrived in sight of Punta Arenas our crew had slept off

their drunken madness, and were as meek as so many sucking doves when we made fast our hawser to a buoy off the pier.

While ashore, sitting at lunch in the hotel at Punta Arenas that day, I suffered the terrifying experience of an earthquake; my first impression was that some practical joker, approaching me from behind, had tilted up my chair; but when I saw all the guests turn pale, leap to their feet, and fly out of doors; when I heard the crash of broken crockery and glasses, and the cries and lamentations of the inhabitants, I realised that we were in the midst of a seismic disturbance. Rushing out of the dining-room, I stood in the midst of the wide main street and watched the telegraph-poles swaying and dancing with grotesque liveliness. Next door to the restaurant, I was surprised to see the only two-storied building in the town making a solemn bow at me – then its roof of tiles came clattering down in an avalanche at my feet. Nothing is so nerve-racking as an earthquake: for hours afterwards I saw the native women squatting, with hair dishevelled, in the squares and open places of the town, rocking themselves in anguish from side to side and weeping. It was an intense relief to me to know that, on board the *Rosmarine*, I could sleep in safety that night.

Nevertheless, hearing that the Grays were expected at San José, I decided to visit the capital of Costa Rica. A short railroad from Punta Arenas transports the traveller to an inn and posting-house at the foot of the hills, and there I spent the night, and at dawn on the morrow continued my journey on mule-back through the mountains. I found the ride a delightful one, and the bracing climate of San José, in the midst of coffee-plantations, a delicious change after the damp, tropical heat of the coast. San José possesses neither drainage, water-supply in the houses, nor any schools, but it boasts the handsomest opera-house in all America. An opera, indeed, is never given, but smart society, on certain days of the week, promenades round and round the *foyer*

listening to a band. From the roof of the building both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans can be seen on a clear day.

The English-speaking colony in San José – mostly Americans engaged in coffee-planting – spend their Sundays in digging up the prehistoric Indian graves which are scattered all over the mountains, in search of golden ornaments, and this somewhat ghoulish pastime is made the occasion for very pleasant picnics on horseback, which, despite my lack of sympathy for the ghouls, I enjoyed immensely.

The great rumour spreading through the streets, while I was in San José, was: '*Delenda est Cartago.*' This proved to be true: the earthquake had not only destroyed the town of Cartago in the mountains, but the railway from the Atlantic port of Limon also, so that the Grays had to re-embark and go round through Panama, where they shipped aboard a Pacific Mail steamer for Punta Arenas. In consequence of this change of plans, I returned post-haste to the coast, and had steam up on the yacht as soon as the mail-boat appeared on the horizon. The situation having been explained, we returned to Cocos Island as fast as our puny engine could propel us; and Gray, who was a great favourite with the Gisslers, was soon able to reason them into a more conciliatory frame of mind.

According to Gissler's information, the corsair, Benito Bonito, anchored his vessel, the *Relampago*, right under the bluff in a small bight between Chatham and Wafer Bays, which obtains some shelter from the Pacific rollers under the lee of Breakfast Island. At high water, he carried his booty in boat-loads as near in to the shore as possible and dumped it overboard, so that at low tide the treasure was lying high and dry close under the foot of the cliff, and, by means of a whip and tackle, the pirates were able to hoist it on to a plateau some three acres in extent and seventy feet above the beach. Now, from the sea, it is impossible to distinguish this plateau, because it is an underfeature

with a cliff rising sheer for one hundred feet or more behind it, so that the bluff has the appearance of an unbroken wall of rock ascending from the water's edge. Owing to the heavy surf and rugged shingle of the shore, it is hazardous to approach in a boat from the sea; but, without much difficulty, we were able to climb up from Chatham Bay, and, after cutting a path through the forest, drop down a 'chimney' on to this plateau. Standing on the cliff's edge, we could recognise the aspect of the place as described in Gissler's clue: 'Above the water and a pistol shot from it, but hidden from the open sea, a large mountain behind, a smaller one in front.' The bearing which comes into so many of the clues: 'one point' – i.e. eleven and a quarter degrees – 'east of north,' we interpreted as the compass-bearing of Breakfast Island from where we stood. But most important of all, on the very brink of the cliff above the beach, in a solid ledge of rock, we found a rusty eye-bolt which had evidently been fixed there with much toil as a hold-fast for a tackle. From boyhood's associations with a favourite spot for picnics in the mountains near his home in Germany, called '*der Judenkessel*,' Gissler had named this hidden plateau the 'Jew's Boiler.'

We first of all set alight to the undergrowth and burnt it, then, having cleared the plateau of the resulting ashes, charred sticks, and timber, we commenced trenching to a depth of seven feet across the level ground at intervals of three yards; had the cache been there, we could not have failed to strike it. The greatest of all our disappointments was the failure to find treasure in the 'Jew's Boiler.'

We used to make it a practice to return to the mainland for fresh supplies every two months or so; and it so happened that the *Rosmarine* was moored in the Gulf of Nicoya on Christmas Day 1904. What was my surprise, in the forenoon, to see a fine large steamship, as white as snow, flying the ensign of the Royal Yacht Squadron, rapidly approaching

the anchorage. She turned out to be the *Véronique*, an old Castle liner of six thousand tons and having a speed of eighteen knots, owned by the Earl of Fitzwilliam.

Soon after she had taken up her moorings, I had the gig manned, and went to pay my respects to her owner. Lord Fitzwilliam himself was on board with many friends, amongst whom were Admiral Palliser, Colonel Gordon Carter, and Mr. Frank Brooke – who, seventeen years later, was murdered in the most cowardly and savage fashion by Michael Collins, or one of the miscreants who were his lieutenants, in Westland Row Station in Dublin. Lord Fitzwilliam returned my visit half an hour later, and, excusing himself from remaining in the *Rosmarine*, as she rolled so heavily that he feared he might be seasick, he invited us all to be his guests for Christmas Day on board his yacht, and to take both lunch and dinner with him.

Accustomed as we were to hard fare, we accepted his kind offer with alacrity, and enjoyed literally sumptuous hospitality! After luncheon I begged Fitzwilliam to grant me a few minutes' conversation in his private cabin. There, finding myself facing Lord Fitzwilliam, Carter, and Brooke, I at once tackled the subject of my interview. On behalf of Harold Gray, who was absent in San José, and the other shareholders of our syndicate, I lodged a protest against his landing on Cocos Island, pointing out that I was the sole holder of the concession to work on the island. I also showed him a telegram which I had received from the Costa Rican President, in reply to one of mine, in which he assured me that he would protect my rights. Nevertheless, as I did not wish to spoil sport, I offered to enter into a provisional agreement to join forces with him and to share any profits.

To my embarrassment, Lord Fitzwilliam, who was obviously ill at ease, refused to discuss the matter with me at all, and said that he would only negotiate with Mr. Harold Gray.

As we stepped over the side of the *Véronique* into our gig,

at midnight, Fitzwilliam wished us a cheery good-bye, adding: 'We are off at dawn to-morrow.'

True enough, at sunrise the big yacht was under weigh.

The passage to Cocos always used to take us three days or more in the *Rosmarine*, but the *Véronique*, with her superior speed, was able to accomplish the journey in twenty hours.

Three days later, the *Véronique* again put into Punta Arenas, and on going ashore I ran across her second mate.

'Hulloa !' I enquired. 'Where have you come from ?'

'Cocos Island,' he replied. 'We have run back to fetch Lord Fitzwilliam's mails. We left our fellows camped on shore; it is pouring cats and dogs. I pity the poor chaps ! Does it never stop raining there ?'

On hearing this not unexpected news, I immediately telegraphed all the facts to the Costa Rican President at San José, and two hours later received his answer, reporting that he had ordered the gunboat and twenty soldiers under a captain to proceed to the Island at once to protect my rights.

Harold Gray having returned from San José by the mid-day train, we got up steam and started hotfoot for Cocos Island about half an hour after the *Véronique* and two hours before the gunboat. Owing to engine trouble, it took us nearly four days to reach our destination; nevertheless, we beat the gunboat by several hours.

We saw no signs of the *Véronique* when we cast anchor in Chatham Bay, and on going ashore it became evident that all Fitzwilliam's party had decamped. Amongst the litter which they had left upon the beach, however, we ran across several bloodstained garments: torn shirts, a crushed hat, a pair of slashed canvas trousers which had evidently been ripped off a wounded leg. It was manifest, too, where they had been working. Fitzgerald's old clue had been read backwards, and marks of explosions, where they had been blasting in the face of the cliff, were in evidence.

Gissler joined us, furious and very excited. He described

how his protests had been met by the *Véronique's* party with threats, jeers, and insults ! He had watched them himself, or had had them watched continuously from a concealed observation-post in the forest, and he had witnessed an accident. To the best of his knowledge, one man had been killed and two or three others had been injured by the premature explosion of a charge of dynamite or gun-cotton. The whole party had re-embarked hastily on the return of the *Véronique*, and she had steamed off in the direction of Panama.

On our return to the mainland two months later, in the month of February, we found that both the American and English Press had been full of the incident. It was unanimously reported by all newspapers that there had been a fight on Cocos Island, and that the gallant little *Rosmarine* had defeated and driven off the *Véronique* with casualties !

'God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before ?'

After Gray's departure for England in February, the friction between Gissler and myself was renewed : he stubbornly refusing to speak to me or even to see me. He sent a message, through Captain Matthews, that he intended taking a month's holiday, and demanded a passage to the mainland in the *Rosmarine*. I explained that owing to the shortness of the dry season I could not consent to this ; whereupon he delivered an ultimatum flatly refusing to work at any other clue after the excavations in the 'Jew's Boiler' had been completed. I thereupon went ashore, forced my way into Gissler's presence, and insisted on coming to a definite understanding with him. Realising that I personally was the bar to all progress, and having extracted a promise from Gissler that after I had gone he would work in harmony with the yacht's officers, I came to the decision that there remained nothing for me to do but to return to England.

It was in the middle of March 1905, that I left Cocos

Island for the last time. The work was continued by Gissler and Captain Matthews all through the following dry season, every likely spot being exhaustively searched.

They found nothing.

Before leaving for home, I undertook to engage some fresh hands at Punta Arenas for the work on Cocos Island. This was always a disagreeable task, as the peons used to insist on an advance of pay before signing on; and, once in possession of a couple of silver dollars, the more dishonest boys would contrive to get hidden in some of the low haunts of the town, from which it was exceedingly difficult to unearth them and hold them to their agreement, especially as the police refused to give us any assistance.

One cheeky fellow, who had pocketed our bonus and evaded us for some months, used to delight in hailing me and mocking me across the street whenever he learned that I was back in the town. He would approach within a yard or two, and then, when almost within my reach, would leap away with the agility of a monkey, making that vulgar gesture which, in the jargon of the schoolboy, is described as cocking a snook. As a Yankee watching the situation explained: 'It was the one big joke in Punta Arenas, and kept the dod-garned place smiling.'

So anxious was the little rascal to exasperate me, that one day, as I strolled towards the quay, pretending to be absorbed in conversation with our engineer, I was able to lure him into incaution; sidling up to me, he tried to engage my attention, even venturing to tweak my sleeve.

'All right, boss, I come now; you 'ave your boat ready!' he jeered.

But by then we had drawn near to the wharf, and, when I sprang at him, he tripped over a hawser-ring on turning, and I had him in my grasp. Running him along the pier, a hand on the scruff of his neck, another gripping the seat of his breeches, I tumbled him down the steps into our dinghy.

Suddenly, however, I became aware of a muttering amongst the workmen who were always loitering about the harbour; a crowd rapidly assembled, and, swarming along the jetty, pressed me backwards towards the sea, hustling me and giving vent in savage murmurs to their deep indignation at witnessing one of their compatriots being roughly handled by a foreigner. I passed a very ugly quarter of an hour with my back to a capstan facing the enraged mob, until the customs guard came doubling up with bayonets fixed and took me into custody. I was locked up in a cell, and it was past midnight before I could obtain bail; indeed, I think the authorities dared not release me earlier, for fear that I might be lynched. I retired to my bunk in the *Rosmarine*, deeply chagrined and ashamed of myself.

At 8 a.m. on the following day, I surrendered to my bail at the local police-court, which was a whitewashed room with a crucifix hanging on the wall; fully a dozen spittoons were ranged about the floor and around the central table; at the darker end of the room there were rows of wooden benches in an evil-smelling atmosphere. At the table, I recognised a *greffier*, or magistrate's clerk, an interpreter, and, on the benches, six policemen, with two prisoners besides myself. We waited and waited for the court to open; after half an hour or so the *greffier* began to show signs of uneasiness. He suddenly rose from his seat at the table, and, with lively gesticulations, stalked out to remind his chief that the court was growing impatient. As he passed me, I noticed that he smelt of garlic and had not shaved for two days!

There was another long wait, during which the six policemen, one after another at intervals of about ten minutes, slipped out on the same mission. As they passed me, I noticed that each smelt of garlic and none had shaved for two days!!

Still no one appeared, and then the two prisoners departed to tell the magistrate that he was badly needed. As they

passed me, I noticed that they smelt of garlic and had not shaved for two days !!!

Finally only the interpreter and I were left. He evidently desired to be friendly. Before leaving me, like the others, he explained the mystery volubly in what to me was a quite unintelligible language. I noticed that he smelt of garlic and had not shaved for two days !!!!

I found myself alone, unmanacled and unguarded, in the Punta Arenas police-court, musing, in this place of administering justice, on the humorous aspect of human frailty, and wishing that a W. S. Gilbert were present to immortalise the situation in song.

It was nearly noon before a merry procession of policemen, prisoners, the clerk, and the interpreter returned, headed by the official clothed with the necessary authority to fine or imprison me; all of them were wiping their mouths with the backs of their hands.

I was fined twenty dollars.

On the following day I bade good-bye to the officers and crew of the *Rosmarine*. José, with tears coursing down his cheeks, threatened to kiss me. I noticed that he smelt of garlic and had not shaved for two days !!!!!

CHAPTER XII

BORING FOR OIL IN GEORGIA

Every man's conscience is a thousand swords
To fight against this guilty homicide.

Richard III, Act V, scene ii.

I TRAVELLED from Port Limon on one of Elders & Fyffes' fruit-steamers carrying bananas to Manchester. Passing up the Ship Canal on a Sunday, we were moored too late to catch the last train to London.

On arrival at Euston, at noon on Monday, I drove direct to my club to ask for letters. In the vestibule, someone with his back turned towards me was making enquiries of the hall-porter; the latter, recognising me over the shoulder of his interrogator, broke into a smile of astonishment and exclaimed: 'Why, here he is!' It was Ernest Beckett – afterwards the second Lord Grimthorpe – who was seeking an interview with me.

'Come in and have some lunch?' I suggested. 'What can I do for you?'

'I want to know,' replied Beckett, 'if you will go to America next Wednesday, to represent me in an undertaking I am backing.'

'I have only just landed from Central America,' I explained. 'I will give you my answer in half an hour, when I have looked through this correspondence which has been accumulating for the last seven months.' I made an appointment to meet the directors of the syndicate he had formed that afternoon, and gathered from them that a certain Mr. Wilson, of Chicago, had invented an apparatus for detecting the presence of oil. With his implements he had located petroleum deposits in what is known as the Black Jack

district of the State of Georgia, where land could be purchased at less than a dollar an acre. Beckett and his friends, having put this apparatus of Wilson's to many tests and satisfied themselves of its merits, had despatched an oil expert and geologist to Jessup, in Warren County, Georgia, who had reported independently that there were certainly indications of mineral oil in the neighbourhood: this determined Beckett to finance Wilson.

My mission was to go to Georgia, after having signed an agreement in New York with Wilson, and secretly buy the land indicated by Wilson as being worth having. When I had secured all the ground desirable, I was to engage a crew of well-drillers from Pennsylvania and sink a bore-hole on the spot fixed upon by Wilson as being the most favourable for testing the value of our property. The enterprise appealing to my spirit of adventure, terms were speedily adjusted, and, by the following Wednesday, I was on my way to New York on the *Teutonic*.

At New York I was introduced to the leading company lawyers, Guthrie, Cravath, and Henderson, who were to draw up the agreement with Wilson. A small room was placed by them at my disposal, and a divine creature, with whom I fell in love at first sight, was lent to me for two days. Mr. Henderson called her a stenographer. I had never heard the word before, and thought it must be American for Goddess of Beauty, until I discovered that it merely meant shorthand-writer, and that she was only mine to attend to my correspondence.

Alas ! how short those two days seemed ! Why, oh, why were they all so damnably efficient, so quick and skilful at their tasks ? Henderson, the clerks, and the divine creature were full of interest in me, attending to my smallest wishes with cheerful, smiling zeal until the agreement was signed, sealed, and delivered ; then, alas ! I passed as completely out of their minds as if I had never existed. When, two days later, my heart thumping with emotion, I ran across

the divine creature, by chance, on a street-car, she did not show the faintest sign of recognising me.

There is, nevertheless, a most cheery atmosphere about the business quarter of New York which is an intense relief after the sombre tone prevalent in the City of London. The best offices, sumptuously furnished, are usually at the summit of a skyscraper, on perhaps the thirtieth floor; from their windows the most beautiful views of the Hudson River can be obtained. I verily believe the average New Yorker prefers his office to his home, because there, amidst blithesome surroundings, he is unfettered by tyrannical domestic exactions. The unapproachable head of a firm, who so often assumes a scowl, with a view, presumably, to enhancing his prestige and widening the chasm between himself and his employees, is quite unknown in the United States. The American never seems to wish to carry out that detestable duty which Englishmen so often believe they are bound to perform and which is known as 'putting the fellow in his place' !

I found Savannah, Georgia, charming; in the autumn, winter, and spring the climate is delightful, but in the summer the heat is oppressive – quite tropical. I was shown the greatest hospitality, being made an honorary member of the Oglethorpe Club, where I learned to enjoy gumbo well seasoned with green peppers, clam-chowder, terrapin-soup, shad baked on a plank, rice-birds and ruddy duck: dishes rarely tasted in Europe; though the shad – *alose* – is considered a delicacy in Bordeaux and Touraine. The Oglethorpe Club possessed, too, some choice Burgundy, jealously guarded and only produced on ceremonial occasions: the night of the annual audit-supper, for instance. A sage old native of Dantzic, whose acquaintance I had made, who had spent a lifetime at cotton-broking – half in Egypt and half in the Southern States – a real gourmet to boot, warned me that, if I appreciated good red wine, I should witness some amusing sights at the audit-supper, and that I had

better join his table, where he undertook to have the Chambertin carefully cradled, uncorked, and aired. When the evening arrived, I was grateful for my friend's invitation; elsewhere, I saw the precious Burgundy standing in ice-pails, being vigorously spun round by the zealous hands of Ethiopian attendants more accustomed to cooling champagne than serving ruby wines from Dijon or Bordeaux.

'My !' remarked an unsophisticated youth, as he sipped from his frosted glass, 'that's wonderful stuff, only I guess I've got to be educated up to it ! Sambo, bring me a Scotch high-ball !'

During the winter I used to attend the 'Germans': 'Germans' are small and early dances. There were no decorations, no refreshments; only a bare hall, with a first-class band, an exquisite floor, and a dais where sat the three chaperons on duty, to whom all had to make their bow on entry. Every young lady has her *beau*, who conducts her from her home to the dance, remains her partner for the night, and finally escorts her back to the bosom of her family after the revels have ceased. Of course, there are many young men at the 'Germans' who are unattached; these are known as 'stags'; occasionally, during the evening, a master of ceremonies shouts: 'Stags !' It is then that the forlorn cavalier has his chance: anyone can dance with anybody. But the 'stag' is never a 'wallflower' for long; even in the ordinary numbers he may break in for a few turns, separating the lady from her swain while they are dancing. It is an aggravating fashion for the mere man, but a strict rule of the game, so everyone has to submit to it. A girl, however, prizes the breaks-in, much as a Redskin prized his scalps, while the *beau* surrenders with a sickly smile and a sort of thy-need-is-greater-than-mine expression.

A charming custom throughout America is that which constitutes the *débutantes*, for the year of their presentation, the queens of society; during their brief reign they take precedence of all.

I had to spend several days in each week at Jessup, a dreary spot in the midst of the woods: a railway-junction, with a few shanties, a bank, a drug-store, and an ice and power factory, situated some four miles south of the Altamaha River, in Warren County.

Whereas from the end of the Great War until 1934 prohibition prevailed in all the States, in my time, of the State of Georgia, only Warren County was 'dry.' One could fill one's flask in Savannah and drink the contents in Jessup, but one could not purchase liquor in Jessup – that is to say, not in a straightforward fashion.

The drug-store was a great place of meeting; a sort of club where yarns were swopped, news related, and scandal whispered. Its dispenser, too, had a recognised faculty for prescribing for minor ailments, and this attracted a stream of customers at certain hours of the day, when again and again one might witness the following scene:

A customer would approach the counter, looking sheepish, while the dispenser, catching his eye, continued, unperturbed, slowly wiping and polishing the slab in front of him with a napkin: this being the familiar gesture of welcome practised immemorially by American bar-tenders. Then would come the greeting:

'How are yer feelin' ?'

'I ain't feelin' good !'

'What's the trouble ?'

'Stummic, I guess !'

Whereupon the dispenser, selecting with care a medicine-glass, would turn round and scan the shelves until his eyes rested upon a certain jar containing a golden liquid, which he always affected to discover with difficulty. Grasping it, and holding the medicine-glass up to the light, he would close one eye, carefully measure out about two inches of the precious yellow liquor, and, having done so, would solemnly push the glass across the shining board to his patient, with the remark:

'That'll fix yer !'

The customer, laying a quarter-dollar piece on the counter, would gulp down the draught without a word, and move off to make room for the next sufferer, when the farce would recommence.

Often on a sultry, drowsy evening, seated by the soda-fountain in a rocking-chair, I have nodded, and, amidst my slumbers, listened to the monotonous dialogue, like the droning of priests at Vespers.

'How're yer feelin' ?'

'I ain't feelin' good !'

'What's the trouble ?'

'Stummic, I guess !'

A lull, a tinkling, then : 'That'll fix yer !'

One day the repertoire of the drug-store's comedians changed dramatically.

A youth, with quicker wit than the ordinary – and, perhaps, a profounder thirst – dashed in, hatless and in his shirt-sleeves.

'Here ! Gimme a jug o' your dope, quick !' he yelled. 'There's a gent's bin snake-bit in our yard. Gee ! ain't he sick !'

And the bluff came off !

I had no difficulty in buying real estate in the neighbourhood. I began by winning the reputation for being a prompt settler of my debts and undertakings. No one suspected that I was after oil ; the land, poor as it was, nevertheless produced pines which were being tapped for turpentine, and turpentine and resin were rising then in the quotations for 'naval stores.'

I soon possessed all I required as far as Doctor's Town, a siding on the railway at the bridge over the Altamaha River, and a wharf where the steamers might call. I acquired property, too, contiguous to both the Southern Railway and the Atlantic Coast Line ; so no jealous, covetous rival company could scheme and plot to cut us off from our markets.

Wilson's implement for oil-finding fascinated me; he permitted me to operate it. At certain spots it became like a live thing in my hands, and rose upright when I strove to keep it horizontal, Wilson alleging that beneath those spots there must be petroleum. He would not allow me to examine the interior of the apparatus, but always stood by me when I handled it and took it from me when I had finished any experiment; it was sewn up in chamois leather. In an empty hut, I tested it over bowls filled with every sort of fluid; it responded to nothing but mineral oil.

Wilson said I was exceptionally skilful, or sensitive, in its manipulation, the instrument functioning even better for me than for him; but I never knew anyone for whom it would not work at all.

One day I made a remarkable discovery. I found that I had the gift of water-divining. I, the sceptic of sceptics, who never can bring myself to believe anything which cannot be proved, and who had always sneered at the dowzers, awoke to find that I was one myself!

It happened thus:

Wilson had carefully selected a place for sinking our bore-hole when he announced his intention of choosing an alternative site near the river; because, he pointed out, we should require plenty of water for our engine, not to mention that which would be needed for the men's camp.

'Maybe,' he added, 'we shall not strike water just here.'

'How can we strike water?' I enquired.

'Oh, by boring till we find it,' continued Wilson. 'I wish I had a water-diviner here,' he sighed; 'it would make our task easier.'

'How do water-diviners go to work?' I asked.

'Like this,' he explained, cutting a twig – the sort of fork-shaped stick which schoolboys seek for making catapults – and showing me how to hold it.

'Let me try,' I begged.

Gripping the switch, a hand on each branch, and raising

the point at an angle of forty-five degrees, I moved forwards. I had not advanced fifty yards before I felt the end being drawn irresistibly downwards; the tighter I grasped it and the more I strove against it, the more the twig bent to the earth, and was curved until the bark was actually twisted off the wood by torsion.

‘Look, look!’ I cried excitedly. ‘I can do it, I can do it! By George! I am a dowser!’

I behaved like a child with a new toy, and Wilson encouraged me. For three days I could think of nothing else. I practised my skill in every way: however I approached them, forwards, backwards, or blindfold, I invariably returned to the same points of attraction. I tested the ground with both twigs and the oil-instruments, and I found that they rarely ever reacted at identical spots—presumably only where the water and oil-streams crossed. I then carefully co-ordinated the district where we had decided to sink our bore-hole, advancing with my switch from every azimuth, and so fixed the exact place for drilling a well. There we drove down several lengths of inch-and-a-half steel pipe and struck water at a depth of fourteen feet. For more than a twelvemonth the well which I located supplied water for our engine, running day and night unceasingly, and for a camp of seven men.

I boasted of my newly found talents in Jessup, where, on account of them, I became in great request by farmers, and I found five wells for graziers who previously had experienced difficulty in watering their cattle; nor have I ever failed in any test to which I have submitted; and many years later I carried out some remarkable experiments with another dowser, Dean Ovenden of St. Patrick’s, for Professor Barrett, F.R.S. I also discovered water in a very dry district of Cambridgeshire; the well sunk there, under my directions, to the depth of seventy feet has supplied water in abundance to four cottages for the last eighteen years.

After having erected a rig, or derrick, seventy feet high, I engaged a team of drillers from Pennsylvania, who pitched their camp near the rig, soon had their engine running, and were driving a ten-inch pipe into the ground. Faults occurring at the shallower depths, we had to reduce our bore to a diameter of eight inches, and subsequently to six inches; but the work, although interesting to watch at the commencement, became tedious, and our progress was slow, the average advance being little more than five feet a day for over a year. There was nothing to do but to exercise patience until oil might be struck.

I have never met with pleasanter fellows to work with than my crew of drillers; they would have been ashamed to render less than a real, good week's work for a week's pay; and they could no more have shirked their job than they could have cheated at cards; for them, it would have been dishonourable! They were amusing and interesting too, in their leisure hours, and I used to enjoy spending a few days with them. They loved hunting. In America, 'hunting' is the same as the French word *la chasse*; it means shooting as well as chasing your quarry. And in the woods of Georgia game was plentiful, quails, squirrels, and doves abounding.

But the great passion of every American who is a sportsman is fishing, and some splendid fishing can be obtained in the creeks and backwaters which cut up the coast of Georgia into a maze of lagoons and streams, all subject to the ebb and flow of the Atlantic tides. Amidst them I passed some delightful week-ends on small yachts or in camps: bass and whiting were taken in large quantities; but nothing fascinated me so much as watching the negroes catching prawns with a casting-net. The central mesh is held in the teeth, the net is spun, flung, and released simultaneously, so that it alights flat and well outspread upon the surface of the water; the heavily weighted perimeter sinking faster than the middle, the prawns are enveloped, imprisoned, and

prevented from escaping when the net is drawn upwards through a slip-ring.

No one who has passed thirty-five years of his life in the Old World can migrate to the New without having his susceptibilities offended when he first encounters Americans. I remember going round behind the scenes to visit a famous English actress who was playing in New York. I found her in a passion; she had been attacked in the Press for immodesty, because, in her part, she had permitted her husband to put on her stockings for her.

‘Oh, how I hate these Americans!’ she raged. ‘I wish, I wish . . .’

‘Why not say,’ I interjected, ‘you wish the Americans had but one posterior so that you might kick it?’

I myself have often entertained similar sentiments, even when partaking of American hospitality. I detest Uncle Sam’s Chadband-like hypocrisy, his international political outlook, his reduction of all judgments to money-standards, and the tone of his newspapers; nevertheless, the most charming, interesting companions I have ever met have been Americans.

The inexplicable thing to me in America is the way in which intelligent men suffer themselves to be held in bondage by their women, who are veritable tyrants. The result is disastrous to the women! I have shocked Americans by declaring that the New World might be a happier place if their women were whipped more often.

A Yankee complained to me: ‘It’s your *more often* which riles me!’

Americans are over-educated; their minds have been deformed and squeezed into conventional shapes by teachers, just as the foot of the Chinese girl used to be deformed and squeezed into a stereotyped shoe. They have no faculty for meditating aloof from, and uninfluenced by, the set opinions of their own community. The wisdom of the ages, that most precious talent, which is to be found amongst the uneducated

peasants of the Old World, cannot be discovered amongst Americans; it has all been forced out of them by the school-ma'am and by the professor. They read, read, read: imbibing other folk's ideas, their minds cabined, cribbed, confined in another soul's setting. They drug themselves with knowledge-tabloids, so that a mere walking encyclopædia is regarded by them as supremely wise. It is to be feared that in England we are travelling along the same educational road. There are many things to be admired in the United States, notwithstanding. The Americans are very charitable in their judgments of others, and have less of those detestable class-distinctions which prevail amongst us and are due to the inherent snobbishness of the English, making the board-school boy pretend that he cannot speak his language grammatically, despite his costly education, and the public school boy, precious, patronising, and supercilious. Of course, there are plenty of snobs in America, but these are usually the women who have been flaunting their expensive dalliance in the capitals of Europe. Schools and universities teach the sons of the vulgar rich, in England, to be less rich and more vulgar, and in America to be more rich and more vulgar !

American politicians are popularly supposed by the English to be venal; but personally I doubt whether American can be more venal than English politics; but that American politics is a vile, unsavoury game I had evidence in Savannah, as the following narrative will show:

Most Englishmen have heard of Tammany Hall, the club or political machine of the Democratic Party in the State of New York. Whosoever subscribes to its funds, and remains a loyal member of the club, will have the benefit of Tammany Hall's protection and patronage, and will be assured of a living in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him, whenever the Democratic Party may be in power. In Georgia there was a Republican Club as well as a Democratic Club, and everyone who desired to have his

finger in the political pie – that is to say, all lawyers, journalists and Irishmen – belonged to one or other of these two caucuses. One, if I remember rightly, was known as the Citizens' Club, the other as the Sons of Freedom.

Although, in those days, there was universal male suffrage in the United States, no man could vote on the polling day unless he had previously registered himself as a voter on registration day. The great game on registration day was for the heelers of the Citizens' Club to prevent supporters of the Sons of Freedom from registering their names as electors; and, of course, vice versa.

The word 'heeler' is derived from the sport of cock-fighting; it means one who can kick hard: briefly, in American politics, the 'heeler' is a gun-man, a bloody miscreant who will stick at nothing !

So it came about that, on the morning of registration day in Savannah, in the spring of 1906, there was a good deal of hustling in the queue of prospective voters waiting their turns to register their names. The more respectable and busy members of the community accordingly abandoned all idea of recording their names and went about their business, while there was a good deal of rough play between those who had more leisure and political zeal, and finally the heelers came to blows. Thus an ugly spirit was abroad in Savannah that day, and by noon the heelers of the Citizens' Club were nursing their resentment and licking their wounds.

It must be remembered that the climate of Georgia is semi-tropical, so that from noon until four in the afternoon Savannah goes to sleep. At about 2 p.m., coming out of the restaurant where I always took my midday meal, I found the street deserted, and I walked in leisurely fashion up a shady avenue of palmettas to the big, open space where stand the post office and town hall. A belated street-car rumbled up, and, stopping in front of the town hall, dropped off a passenger and proceeded on its journey, leaving the passenger alone in the middle of the tramlines. Suddenly,

without a word of warning, a man darted from the shadow of a palmetta and, crying: 'I have been laying for you, you son of a gun,' shot the car-passenger dead with a revolver.

This was the signal for a regular battle. Taking cover behind the masonry at the entrance to a drinking-saloon, I witnessed the whole affair. There were about a dozen heelers engaged; every one of them was an Irish-American, and, like Roderick Dhu's warriors, the gun-men seemed to rise out of the ground. In particular, I noticed two emerge from the town hall with pistols in their hands; one was wearing a bright, crimson waistcoat – what Americans call a vest. Taking shelter behind the Corinthian columns of the building, they would reload their weapons, then shoot from behind the pillars at their adversaries. A man, supplying himself from a pile of granite blocks for repairing the track, was hurling stones at these two who were firing back at him, swinging himself round on his hips to give momentum to his casts, as a baseball-player pitches. Suddenly the stone-thrower drew himself upright and, spinning round on his heel, ran, pursued by the gun-man with the crimson waistcoat, for fully ninety yards along the avenue, then pitched on his face dead: he had been shot clean through the heart. The heeler, whose name I afterwards learnt was McBride, stood over his victim's body, and, cautiously holding his pistol at the ready, peered round as though expecting an attack. His eye alighting on me, he covered me with his revolver and looked me up and down suspiciously. I was standing against the wall with my arms stretched out, and the palms of my hands outspread. Turning about, McBride walked briskly back to the town hall and disappeared inside.

There were two corpses lying on the roadway; a man seated on the floor of the post office was nursing his leg and moaning; another sufferer, his face clasped in his hands, the blood pouring through his fingers, was staggering along the tram-lines, screaming. I walked across the avenue and bent

over the stone-thrower; his nostrils were filled with blood, his forehead plastered with dirt, as he had made no effort to protect it with his hands as he fell; his face was like wax, I could see that he was dead. He was lying immediately under a plate fixed in the wall to mark the spot where John Wesley had first preached in the State of Georgia; this enabled me subsequently to measure accurately the amazing distance run by the dead man after the bullet had pierced his heart: it was ninety-three yards!

Just then an immense crowd came rushing down the avenue and into the open place from every direction; like a tide of waters they surged around me. Above the murmurs of the people I could hear the clang of the ambulance-gong and the clatter of galloping horses. A policeman on the edge of the crowd, the last man to arrive on the spot, advanced slowly towards me. To him I said: 'I know where the man is who did this. He is a cowardly murderer; he shot an unarmed man; if you will come with me at once we can arrest him.'

'I will not!' answered the constable—an Irish-American. 'Who are you, anyway?'

Just then a friendly member of the Oglethorpe Club, sidling up to me through the throng, plucked my sleeve and whispered: 'Hold your tongue, for God's sake! This is politics; the pity is that more of the brutes weren't killed. Be careful! You may get shot yourself!' I was too indignant, however, to be cautious, and my name and address were taken and I was warned that I should be called as a witness. During the next few weeks, every attempt was made to intimidate me; I used to be rung up on the telephone by mysterious well-wishers who insisted on remaining anonymous and who sometimes even threatened me.

Eventually two men, one of whom was McBride, were brought to trial for murder, both being admitted to bail. McBride being a member of the Citizens' Club and the district attorney being of the opposite faction, counsel for

the prosecution was carefully selected from amongst more friendly barristers who belonged to the same club as the defendant; the district attorney standing aside and only taking up the case against the other prisoner who was a 'Son of Freedom.' All concerned seemed to conspire to obtain acquittals! The trial was a farce: a string of witnesses swore that McBride, at the risk of his life, had gone to the rescue of his old father, who was being beaten to death by Dyer, the murdered man, and amidst applause the defendant – who happened to be an orphan – was acquitted.

I was treated with extreme courtesy on the witness-stand, and the only question put to me on cross-examination was: 'Did you say that McBride was a cowardly murderer and ought to be hanged?'

My answer to this was: 'Yes,' and it seemed to astonish the prisoner's advocate.

When counsel for the defence addressed the jury, he made fun of my name and alleged that I was giving evidence out of spite against McBride – a total stranger to me! As he pleaded his client's cause, the barrister walked up and down so close to the jurors that he was inside the cuspidors ranged in a row for their use, making his points by plucking their sleeves, patting them on the shoulders, or expectorating into one of their spittoons. He emphasised his arguments by an extravagance of shouting, and his peroration ran thus:

'Finally, gentlemen, you are far too intelligent, having heard the evidence, to need my poor arguments to convince you of my client's innocence. And I am confident that, before the sun has dipped his golden shield behind the western horizon to-night, you will have restored his liberty to this brave, noble youth!'

The most unspeakably cruel murders are continually being committed in Georgia, where, even for the United States, the population is exceedingly barbarous, there being, besides the low Irish and Italians in the towns, a large number of Poor Whites living in the woods in extreme indigence. The Poor Whites are descended chiefly from

those unhappy beings who, in the days of the Stuarts, were taken prisoners during the Monmouth rising, transported to the American colonies, and sold as slaves to the owners of plantations. They seem to have inherited the bitter hatred of mankind and detestation of the English, which those mournful slaves must have nurtured in their bosoms. They are sullen, morose, and their hand is against every man's: one can pass hours in their company without hearing them speak. A Poor White once rode alongside a friend of mine from dawn until sunset without saying a word, despite my friend's efforts to make himself agreeable. As they parted, he remarked, 'I'm kinder sorry for you Britishers, being in the bondage of a woman !' He meant Queen Victoria.

Though murders are common, I believe a white man has never been hanged in Georgia. Sometimes, however, a dangerous character, having evaded arrest, and roaming around with a gun, is declared an outlaw, and is shot at sight by the sheriff's posse, or even by a layman seeking a reward.

During my brief sojourn in Savannah I was present at several trials, and was able to observe the dilatoriness of the State Courts where white folk are concerned, and their unfairness towards Ethiopians. The position of the coloured population is, indeed, a melancholy one, as they can only be tried by judges who are hostile and by juries who are prejudiced against them.

I once saw a negro tried for molesting a white woman. Although as innocent as an unborn babe, this unfortunate black man would undoubtedly have been lynched had he been indicted in some small town; but in Savannah a sufficiently strong force of police was available to afford him protection. The circumstances were as follows: The white woman, although happily married, was carrying on an intrigue with a lover. One day her husband, returning unexpectedly and entering by the front door, overheard movements in the parlour, then the noise of a person (the

paramour) hurriedly escaping by the back exit and simultaneously his wife's voice screaming.

Dashing into the parlour, he found her with her hair and dress disarranged and in hysterics.

'What has happened?' he demanded.

'Oh, God!' she shrieked. 'A nigger has been molesting me; I fought with him, and when he heard you he bolted!'

Flinging herself on the floor, she then pretended to be exhausted and to sob. The husband, in a frenzy, aroused the neighbours, and a cordon was rapidly drawn about the quarter, so that no one could escape. Every negro was rounded up and all were brought to be confronted by the white woman.

'Now then,' clamoured the crowd, 'which is he?'

The guilty wife hesitated to identify her assailant, and appeared confused.

'Come, hurry up, say!' they insisted. 'He must be one of these!'

In a quandary, forced to avow her offence or to make a scapegoat, in desperation she pointed to a big, hefty Ethiopian.

'That's the man!' she cried.

Fortunately, by that time a considerable body of constables was on the spot and the black man was led away to prison amidst the howls of the mob clamouring for his blood.

At the trial the truth came out; moreover, it was proved that the prisoner had been working all that afternoon in a carpenter's shop within sight of his employer, so that he could not possibly have been guilty. Nevertheless, it was with the greatest reluctance that the negro was acquitted, and although the poor fellow begged to be kept in custody for a few hours, as the crowd in the streets was still in an ugly, menacing mood, he was ordered out of court. Some coloured friends managed to smuggle him through a back door, and he escaped the bloodthirsty attention of the white population.

The woman was never prosecuted for perjury !

The laws in the Southern States are framed to prevent miscegenation and are very drastic : it is a criminal offence for a white woman to cohabit with a coloured man, and no mixed marriage can possibly be made legal. While I was in America a white woman was condemned to seven years in the penitentiary for living with a black man with whom she had gone through some form of marriage-ceremony ; the judge, in sentencing her, remarked : 'I wish to God I could give you more !'

A negro employed by me on occasion at Doctor's Town was lynched. This is the story :

He used to work for a Poor White, a boatman who had an imbecile daughter, and they all dwelt in a wretched shack on the banks of the Altamaha River. One day this negro went to the store at Doctor's Town siding to fetch some goods consigned to his master, when a dispute arose between him and the storekeeper, who was half tipsy. Whereupon the latter, enraged at being cheeked by the nigger, out of revenge telephoned to Jessup, reporting that the negro had been molesting the half-witted girl. A posse of constables was accordingly despatched at once by train from Jessup to arrest the negro, and, although no complaint whatever had been made at any time by either the Poor White or his daughter, the wretched black was seized, manacled, and conveyed by rail to Jessup. At the station, a huge, armed crowd thirsting for blood awaited the prisoner, and, as he stepped down from the train, he was simply riddled with shot.

Not the slightest attempt was ever made to prosecute anyone for this barbarous murder.

'Well,' remarked a cynical cotton-broker, when I expostulated with him for his callous unconcern at this outrage, 'I guess he did carry on with that crazy girl, as she was caught weeping ; anyway, he was a nigger, so it don't matter !'

The leniency of the authorities towards white criminals in

the Southern States can lead to comic situations. Thus I once saw a man of about thirty years of age sitting whittling a stick by a saw-mill in the woods near Savannah; he was pointed out to me as the person who had been convicted of a most brutal murder about three years previously. He had been reprieved, after being condemned to death, and was supposed to be serving a term of imprisonment. In Georgia, however, convict-labour can be obtained by landowners on application to the prison-authorities; so the uncle of this miscreant had applied for labourers from the penitentiary to run his saw-mill, and, by a little wangling, had contrived to get his nephew included in the gang of convicts allotted to him. For the first few weeks the nephew was marched daily under escort of warders to and from the gaol. Representations were then made that the saw-mill could only be efficiently run if this condemned assassin were permitted to remain permanently on the spot as an overseer. So in the end, the uncle having given some sort of guarantee that his nephew would not be permitted to roam at large, this bloody miscreant lived at ease in the house of his relation and used to stroll down to the saw-mill occasionally.

Despite the injustice which they often suffer, the Ethiopians on the whole much prefer the Southerners to the Northerners. A South Carolinian woman once told me that, as a girl, she used to think that 'Damned Yankee' was one word, for she had never heard 'Yankee' said without the condemnatory qualification.

Although capable of lynching a nigger without a qualm of conscience, the Southerner has an affection for the negroes; relations between whites and blacks are tender – somewhat akin to those between Bill Sykes and his dog. Most of the whites have had darkies for nurses, and the black Nanna loves and is beloved !

They are simple, deeply religious folk, these darkies, about whom the most charming anecdotes are related. A wealthy cotton-grower told me that one day, when he was a child,

there was great excitement in his home, because the first balloon ever seen made a descent near the house.

His old Nanna, trotting across the fields, accosted the man stepping out of the car thus :

‘Mornin’, Massa Jesus ! How’s your Pa ?’

By the summer of 1906, although our bore-hole had reached a depth of two thousand feet, we had not found a trace of oil. Wilson’s apparatus obviously reacted to something else as well as oil – possibly limestone or some worthless mineral. Instruments for finding diamonds have been invented, but, unfortunately, they also detect carbon in all its baser forms, and so are of no value.

All our capital had been expended, and we were discussing the possibility of raising fresh funds on a debenture issue, when the San Francisco earthquake shook the financial position of our wealthiest backer to its very foundation. Our position was desperate. I was ordered to bring the work to a close, demolish the rig, break up the camp, pay off our well-drillers, resell the land to pay our debts, and return to England as soon as possible.

I left Georgia with many deep regrets, because there I had formed friendships, and even more romantic emotions had been kindled in my heart ; but, unemployed, I was not a very eligible *parti*, and to the American – more, perhaps, than to any other woman – a lover without money is like a troubadour without his guitar !

CHAPTER XIII
IRELAND BEFORE THE WAR

Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm.
Macbeth, Act I, scene ii.

IT was during my sojourn in America that I took up the study of German metaphysics.

I once met a clergyman who, although permitted to continue preaching to his unhappy congregation, was suffering from a mental disease which, I understood, was due to his not having used his brain for years – it had become atrophied. He gave me a feeling of disgust. While waiting in Savannah for our drillers to strike oil, it was borne in upon me that I was idling and allowing my brain to lie fallow, and I was seized with dread that I might become like that drivelling, unpleasant creature, the clergyman. I accordingly set about mastering Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. At first I found it desperately hard work, and I had to read and re-read a passage many a time before understanding it; but in the end I succeeded, and the Transcendental Philosophy has been a great mental stimulus to me and an aid to clear thinking, although it may be of little practical use in this sordid, busy world. It may seem strange that I, who must appear in these pages as a man of action, should hold the great thinkers in such high esteem; nevertheless, to me, the supreme men of all time are Aristotle, Spinoza, Newton, and Kant – I have also the profoundest admiration for Albert Einstein. I admire them as gentle, modest souls, whose simple characters equal their genius. On the other hand, the heroes in war, politics, or exploration are too often vainglorious or shallow: most of them, like the Conquistadors, were cruel, overweening and egotistical.

In 1907 I married and settled down to a quiet life, convinced that my career of adventure was over; that for me the roving life of a pioneer and wanderer was to become a mere memory.

It was in 1911 that I stood as an Independent candidate for South Paddington at a London County Council election, but was heavily defeated. To tell the truth, I should have hated to be returned, as I suffer tortures of ennui in listening to speeches, and I must have found sitting day after day in an assembly, attending to debates, insupportable. I only took a peep into politics to gain an insight into the nature of this quick road to glittering prizes. Years previously, in April 1893, I had been given, as a great favour, a seat in the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons on the occasion of the introduction of a Home Rule Bill by Gladstone; but I became so bored with his heavy circumlocution that after an hour of rhetoric I fled, although I sympathised with the garrulous Old Man's political aims.

I have always been an Irish Nationalist, believing that the English cannot understand Irish mentality, and consequently are wholly incompetent to govern Ireland. And of all English politicians the Liberal is perhaps the one who is the least comprehended by the Irish, who fundamentally can only respect a Government which can enforce obedience. Now the Liberal's creed forbids him to coerce; so that in his heart the Irishman always despises the English Liberal; and during the several crises which arose immediately before the Great War – the Suffragette agitation, the Ulster Rebellion, and the 'Curragh mutiny' – the average Irishman regarded the English Liberals as the basest of poltroons. The English believe in compromising, but an Irishman believes that to compromise is to surrender. The English are convinced that those institutions which have insured him justice and liberty in all ages must also guarantee justice and liberty to all sorts and conditions of men; but in Ireland trial by jury, more often than not, is a farce !

In 1911 I joined the United Irish League, and, when Miss Hoey resigned the secretaryship of the London branch, Mr. John Redmond offered me the post. At that time, however, feeling it to be unwise to commit myself irrevocably to the Irish movement, I refused the offer. Nevertheless, through my association with the League, I obtained some insight into the inner working of several of the rebel societies.

In 1913 it appeared to me that Home Rule for Ireland was certain to pass into law, so we went to live there, for I hoped to be able to participate in my country's affairs, as so many of my ancestors had done in the old days of the Irish Parliament.

In the summer of 1913 I leased a cottage from Professor William Barrett, F.R.S. The cottage is situated in the Rocky Valley, County Wicklow, one of the loveliest spots in the world: to the south rises the Sugar Loaf, a hill which has the imposing contours of a mountain; to the west is Powerscourt, with its exquisite dells, woods, and streams, where lie my great-grandmother, and five of her children, in the old cemetery – it might make one in love with death to think that one might rest in such a place.

As Sir William Barrett showed me over Carrigoona, the cottage which he had recently built, he pointed to a well with a pump in the garden.

'I could not find water here,' he remarked, 'until I called in the assistance of the Dean of St. Patrick's, who is a water-diviner; he located that well for me.'

'I am a dowser, too,' I observed. 'I possess the power very strongly.'

The Professor told me that he was most interested in water-divining, and he proposed that we should carry out some experiments during the summer. A few days later, having cut a suitable twig, I found, to my astonishment, that the point of attraction for my wand was fully four yards distant from the pump. I tried again, and again, approaching the well from every point of the compass, but I was

always drawn to the same spot, about thirteen feet from the well located by Dean Ovenden.

When next I met Professor Barrett, I said to him: 'It is very strange, but I do not agree with the Dean in the location of your well; I am drawn to a point quite thirteen feet to the north-west of your pump.'

Sir William laughed, and answered: 'Don't say a word to a soul about it. I will bring the Dean and we will chaff him!'

A week later, the Professor, the Dean, and I met at Carrigoona, and Barrett remarked banteringly to the Dean:

'You're a pretty water-diviner! I hear you located my well in the wrong place!'

'We'll soon settle that,' retorted the Dean. 'We've both got our wands here, and we'll try now.'

First of all, having locked the Dean into my study on the far side of the house, I accompanied Sir William into the garden, and, as previously, I found the point of attraction to be some thirteen feet from the pump.

'Don't make a mark!' the Professor exclaimed, growing excited. 'Let the Dean find out his own error.'

When the Dean's turn came, I was imprisoned in the study.

The Dean was mystified: on going over the ground with his twig, he had been perplexed to find that, like me, he was attracted to the same spot as I – thirteen feet from the pump.

Then we all sat down together to discuss the results of our investigations. What was the explanation?

Sir William Barrett confessed. At the time when he had requested the Dean of St. Patrick's to mark a site for sinking a well, he had been in negotiation with another party to sell a portion of his land. Now, if this plot of ground had been sold, the spot selected by the Dean would have been outside Barrett's boundary – a most inconvenient situation for his well. Sir William argued that, if water were obtainable on the site marked by the Dean, he would be pretty certain to

strike it a few yards further down the hill; the necessity for drilling a few feet deeper being the worst which could happen. He accordingly shifted the pegs fixed in the ground by the Dean to a point some four yards away and well within his own boundary.

Professor Barrett told me that this experiment was the most convincing test of water-divining he had ever witnessed: because the Dean and I – but more especially the Dean – must have had the greatest temptation, through the force of suggestion, to ‘find’ water at the pump; whereas we both resisted the temptation, and thereby proved that suggestion is not a factor in water-divining, as has been often alleged.

The Professor had a keen sense of humour. How he would have rubbed his hands together and rocked with laughter if he had lived to hear his qualification as a judge of water-divining derided by pompous scientists, because he is said to have once recommended some students to have their capacity for examinations tested by an application of the rod – the divining-rod! Since the immortal Swift sharpened his satire upon the dull wits of English coxcombs there has not been such an example of ‘leg-pulling’ of the artless Anglo-Saxon.

I did not go to Ireland, however, in 1913, to practise dowsing, but to obtain an insight into the political situation. Throughout 1913 and the spring of 1914, political feeling was in a ferment. The procrastination and vacillation of the Liberal Government in the matter of Home Rule were provoking Ulster and irritating the south. There need have been no trouble with Ulster, no revolution led by Sinn Féin, had the Liberals passed their measure rapidly through Parliament in 1912; but they dallied, and their dilatory policy acted as a red rag to a bull! The Ulster Protestants became arrogant and offensive; the delay in passing Home Rule enabling them to improve their military organisation

which they had hurriedly formed to combat it; and the covenanters of Ulster, aroused to religious frenzy, eagerly flocked to the standard of revolt which Sir Edward Carson had raised. This arming was avowedly illegal, but the English Liberal Government dared not enforce the law.

The very ostentation with which Ulster defied the law provoked the admiration of the Celtic Irish who, inherently lawless, are traditionally 'agin' the Government! The south thereupon determined to emulate the north, and so it was that the Irish Volunteers were raised, and placed under the command of Colonel Moore, C.B., an old Connaught Ranger. By that time, I was in the councils of the United Irish League, the political machine of the Irish Party sitting at Westminster, and I was appointed the Inspector of the Volunteers for the County Wicklow. During my inspections, I found the Volunteers well-drilled and full of zeal; their officers, however, were insubordinate, and possessed of an independent spirit which would suffer no control and augured ill for the discipline and united purpose of the force as a whole. They were clamouring for arms.

To grasp fully the history of the Irish Revolution, which achieved its final success in 1921, it is necessary to have an idea of the various political and revolutionary societies existing in Ireland in 1914, when the Great War broke out and cast Carson's rebellion into disrepute.

There was the Gaelic League: an institution for encouraging the Irish language, Irish games, Irish dances, Irish folk-lore, Irish industries. The head of the organisation was Dr. Douglas Hyde, the eminent Gaelic scholar, a single-minded gentleman of noble character.

There was Sinn Fein: founded by Arthur Griffith, a journalist, a thoughtful, sincere man who gave me the impression that he could not hurt a fly! Sinn Fein preached self-reliance; it combated the idea that Ireland must always be supplicating as a beggar, importuning England or America for help. The extreme Nationalists, who despised the Party

sitting at Westminster, and derided the futility of its political activities, all joined Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein adopted the aspirations of the Gaelic League and absorbed it.

There was the Labour Party of Liberty Hall: an Irish branch of the Transport Workers' Union which had brought about the great Dublin Strike in 1913 and 1914. It was a Communist party whose aims were revolution and self-government for Ireland as a Communist State, and which preached direct action. Its members were being drilled to fight by a very lovable fellow, Captain Jack White, D.S.O., a son of Field Marshal Sir George White, V.C. Its leaders were Jim Larkin, Connolly, and the Countess Markievicz. Jim Larkin was a keen temperance reformer who had put an end to the scandalous custom whereby the dock-labourers used to receive their weekly wages in the bar of a public-house. He was the typical agitator who practised all the arts of the rhetorician to play upon the emotions of the mob. I knew him, and, although he never impressed me, he was literally worshipped by his followers. In the poor tenements a picture of Jim Larkin could always be seen alongside one of the Virgin. Connolly, an enthusiastic disciple of Karl Marx, used to advocate violent measures; his speeches were ferocious. He was, nevertheless, a strong, brave man. I always believed he would die for his cause - he did! He was borne to his execution in 1916 on a stretcher, his leg having been shattered in the fighting on Easter Monday, and he was propped up to face the firing platoon. The Countess Markievicz was a neurotic woman who retained traces of her early beauty, and whose parched soul was athirst for excitement and notoriety; she was prepared to commit any violent or bloody deed, heedless of danger to herself, reckless of consequences to others.

Finally, there was the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which is known in the United States as the *Clan na Gael*: this is a secret society which has always employed the most sanguinary measures. When the organisation or machinery

of some institution is considered useful, the I.R.B. floods it with its own members, and it becomes, for the time being, essentially an I.R.B. institution with bloody intent. All the great political murders and outrages in Ireland have been planned by the I.R.B., sometimes appearing as Fenians, sometimes as Invincibles, sometimes as Sinn Feiners: it may be the hand of this Esau or that Esau, but it is always the voice of Jacob! The Phoenix Park murders in 1882 were the work of the I.R.B., and I have no doubt that those of Michael Collins and Kevin O'Higgins might be traced to it too. Its list of members is kept secret; its secrets are jealously preserved; it defies the decrees of the Vatican, and it rules by terror. A member of this terrible society, who betrays its cause, or who even ceases to remain a loyal supporter, is doomed to a violent death. The I.R.B. may have to seek him in the lounge of a Dublin Hotel or on board a liner at the Cape,¹ but it is certain that he will be found and executed. To understand the Irish Revolution, it is essential to apprehend the power and wide ramifications of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, whose grim spectre may appear at any time to remind some trembling rebel of his oath, or to whet his almost blunted purpose!

Colonel Moore and John Redmond strove to keep the volunteers free from the influence of the extreme revolutionary factions, but when the crisis finally came they were as powerless as might be the flimsiest paling to withstand a mighty avalanche.

In Ireland those in favour of the Union were the Ulster Protestants, who posed as loyalists, adopted the Union Jack as their party emblem, and loathed and despised the Celtic Irish on account of their religion and indigence. They were for the most part men prosperous in business and trade.

Besides these, there were the landed caste, who were good sportsmen and excellent farmers, but narrow, uncultured,

¹ Carey the informer was shot on board the *Drummond Castle* in Table Bay, 1883.

snobbish, and quite unable to sympathise with the sentiments and aspirations of the Celtic population, which they regarded as inferior animals. Many of the landed caste were absentees not deserving of much sympathy; but those who lived permanently on their estates were basely betrayed and abandoned by the English politicians in the day of wrath; they were the class, moreover, from which had sprung the finest British officers, civil servants and empire-builders. England might have cut a sorry figure in history without the Irish gentry in the van of her pioneers.

There was also a large party of sycophants who fawned upon the landed caste, and alternately on the priests, politicians, and gombeen-men¹ when the aristocrats were out of sight and hearing. It was exceedingly difficult to know what these unctuous hypocrites really thought, but they subscribed money to the Nationalist cause.

There was another interesting group, wholly devoid of practical common sense, who regarded themselves as the intelligentsia: these dabbled in art, literature, and the drama, frequenting the Abbey Theatre and the Arts Club as patrons or votaries of the muses, and were all Irish Nationalists of an extreme order, contemptuous of the English. Some of them, notwithstanding, joined up for the War but only in a spirit of adventure, not caring which side won, provided they themselves might kindle their incense at the flame of glory on the red battlefields of Flanders or the Somme.

Though I realise how mirthful are the Irish, and how gaily they take their pleasures, I am always conscious of a mournful atmosphere in Ireland. I sometimes think that it is engendered by hatred. Hatred is everywhere: one sees it between religions, factions, trades, professions, and families in Ireland. The son hating his tyrannical father is the tragic, symbolic figure in every Irish drama. And hate has never conquered!

¹ The gombeen-man is the village-usurer.

During the summer of 1914, Ireland became a political witches' cauldron, secret societies, factions, even the military contributing flavouring to the broth. Most of the southern Unionists had the good sense to perceive that the Ulster rebellion could only lead to trouble for themselves, but a small, snobbish *coterie* in County Kildare was all agog to brew further mischief, and it was largely due to them that the so-called 'Curragh mutiny' broke out in the garrison.

Colonel Moore often confided in me his fears that the extremists were about to seize control of the Irish Volunteers.

'What do you mean by the extremists?' I enquired.

'The Sinn Fein faction,' he explained.

'But Sinn Fein is not violent,' I protested.

'It may become so,' he added significantly. 'Sinn Fein is being flooded and may soon be controlled by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.'

The witches' cauldron kept simmering: the Volunteers were clamouring for arms !

I took part in a most interesting council of war in Dublin during the crisis. There were present: Miss Harrison, the only woman member of the Dublin Corporation – she was the sister of the scholarly, lovable Harrison who was such a faithful friend of Parnell's, and was herself a staunch Nationalist; Sir Roger Casement, who was hanged during the War for treason; Shaun McNeill, who was sentenced to death by a court-martial for participation in the 1916 rebellion, but subsequently pardoned; and Colonel Moore. We met to discuss the possibility of forcing the hands of the flaccid, timorous Liberal Ministers who were the embodiment of procrastination, who had nailed to their mast the device: 'Wait and see!' But, without arms, any attempt made by our Volunteers must have proved a ludicrous failure, so we resolved unanimously that nothing useful could be done. Miss Harrison was in tears, and Casement seemed deeply chagrined. I wish I had observed the latter more carefully at the time: he appeared to me to be a silent man whose

cosmos was all *ego*. He had begun life as a ship's purser; he then entered the consular service; he was knighted for the part he played in investigating the Putumayo atrocities.¹ In 1914 he was suffering severely from megalomania; he felt aggrieved, I believe, because he had not been made the ambassador to the United States.

Every Irishman is a rebel at heart, and the clue to any Irish rebel's character is extravagant vanity. He will prefer imprisonment, torture, nay, death, to obscurity; that is why there is always a dramatic setting to every outrage; that is why murder is so prevalent and is so frequently condoned in Ireland, both victim and assassin being forced into the lime-light, and often amongst the Irish – covetous of notoriety – the family is envied whose son has died by the hangman's noose!

No single person was more directly, yet innocently, responsible for the murders committed in Ireland between 1916 and 1922 than that typical English Liberal, Lord Bryce, whose political vision, in regard to Irish affairs, was narrow and faulty. When Chief Secretary, he had insisted on repealing the Arms Act, which forbade the carrying of firearms by any person who had not a licence – a yellow ticket – which was issued by the Royal Irish Constabulary, and enabled that most efficient police to trace every rifle, gun, or pistol in the country. As soon as the Arms Act was repealed, revolvers and rifles poured into Ireland. The Ulstermen began the importation: they started gun-running, thereby gaining enormous prestige throughout the four provinces of the Emerald Isle, where applause is always forthcoming for the successful defiance of the English Government. Moreover – and may this never be forgotten – Orangemen threatened to invite the German Kaiser to come to their assistance.

¹ Atrocities inflicted in South America upon natives collecting rubber in Brazil and Paraguay.

We, too, in the south determined to arm ourselves. I had always had grave misgivings about the wisdom of introducing rifles into Ireland; but I was not going to submit to being bullied by the Covenanters of Ulster, because the weak, contemptible English politicians dared not enforce the law. Besides, Mr. John Redmond told me that, if we were to refuse to supply arms in response to their clamours, our Volunteers would certainly transfer their allegiance to the extremists of the I.R.B., and that he and his colleagues would lose control.

During July 1914, accordingly, rifles and ammunition, having been purchased on the Continent, were smuggled on yachts into the south of Ireland. Two expeditions were undertaken, the one for which Erskine Childers, Darrell Figgis, and Miss Spring Rice were responsible caused a stir, inasmuch as they were caught red-handed in the act of landing arms at Howth on a Sunday morning. Troops were hurried out to arrest the gun-runners, but, perplexed by their orders and counter-orders, humiliated by the open defiance of the Irish Volunteers, and exasperated by the jeers of the mob, they retreated in some disorder, and, further provoked by insults and a hail of missiles, they fired upon the crowd, and caused the death of two innocent creatures on Bachelor's Walk – so adding seasoning to the witches' broth.

Another gun-running raid, in which I took a subordinate part, was carried through without a hitch. Connor O'Brien and his sister navigated their yacht to the North Sea, where they took over a cargo of rifles and cartridges from a Dutch tug; with the utmost coolness and skill, O'Brien sailed his yacht down the English Channel, right through the English Fleet, then shaped his course northwards towards the Welsh Coast.

It having been deemed essential to have a steam-vessel for the actual landing, the precious cargo was transferred off the coast of Anglesea to an auxiliary steam-yacht, the property of Sir Thomas Myles, and landed at midnight on a sandy

shore just north of Wicklow Head, where motor-cars were waiting to carry the rifles to different depôts.

Our task accomplished, we sailed in beautiful weather to Kingstown Harbour, where we took up our moorings at about 2 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, the 2nd of August. During the previous four and twenty hours, we had observed very many torpedo-boat destroyers in St. George's Channel, steaming south at full speed.

It must be borne in mind that for six days or so we had been cruising about off Anglesea, waiting for a chance to effect our rendezvous with O'Brien's yacht, and so we had been out of touch with all newspapers for nearly a week. When we had sailed from Kingstown, the little world in which we lived was ringing with the 'Curragh mutiny,' the Howth gun-running, the shooting affair on Bachelor's Walk; there did not seem to be room in the universe for more exciting incidents. We jumped to the conclusion, accordingly, that the gunboats which we saw hurrying through the Irish Sea were so hastening on our account, and we felt flattered and proud at having circumvented the watch-dogs of the Royal Navy.

Exhausted with our night's heavy work, we all slept aboard the yacht until 9 a.m., when, after a swim, we went ashore in the dinghy to seek our homes. As we approached the wharf, I saw old Davy Stevens, the newsvendor, on the jetty, offering the *Irish Times* for sale in his well-known croaky voice.

'Hulloa !' I exclaimed. 'Something extraordinary must have occurred for the *Irish Times* to be published on a Sunday.'

I purchased a copy, and the head-line which instantaneously caught my eye was this: 'Germany Declares War on Russia.'

For a few days there was much uncertainty: the Government seemed as vacillating and weak on the greater question of war as they had proved themselves to be on the lesser problems of Women's Suffrage and Home Rule, and when

at last war was declared, it was because England, trembling for her own fate at the hands of the Germans, was provoked beyond endurance by the invasion of Belgium – even a Liberal worm will turn !

The effect of the War on Ireland was peculiar: there did not seem to be any enthusiasm for it, and I gathered the impression that John Redmond's generous gesture in the House of Commons, by which he offered the Irish Volunteers to fight for the cause of France and England, was by no means endorsed in Ireland. At first Mr. Redmond believed that regiments of the Irish Volunteers commanded by their own officers, flying their own banners and blessed by their own priests, would be trained and sent to the front; but Lord Kitchener threw cold water on the proposal from the first. Although he allowed the Ulster Division to parade a scarlet flag worked by Ulster ladies, he flatly refused to permit a similar green flag worked by the Roman Catholic ladies of Munster, Leinster, and Connaught to be displayed by Irish Divisions; he announced that those Irish who wished to give their services must join British units. No single act ever did England's cause so much harm in Ireland as Kitchener's snub to the Irish Volunteers. And when it was alleged – no doubt falsely – that, on the retreat from Mons, Catholic soldiers had not been permitted to attend Mass, the greatest indignation was expressed. In a few days the Irish Volunteers melted away, leaving a residue of extremists over whom Colonel Moore and John Redmond had no control; of extremists who, hating the very name of England and secretly proclaiming themselves rebels, began to build up the Irish Republican Army which in 1921 made England taste the bitterest dregs of humiliation, defeat, and dishonour. For it must never be forgotten that the Easter Rising in 1916 and the Revolution in 1921 were immediately due to the capture of the control of Sinn Fein and of the Irish Volunteers by the Irish Republican Brotherhood or *Glan na Gael*.

Lord Kitchener was quite unable to comprehend the psychology of soldiers – their reactions to enthusiasm or dejection – the importance of keeping men in good spirits, interested, and fully occupied. Thus in 1896, Kitchener brought a brigade from India to Egypt at the beginning of his Omdurman campaign; he cantoned them at Suakim, leaving them there for more than a year to eat out their hearts in disappointment, idleness, and boredom, despite the expostulations of their officers; and then he expressed his surprise and displeasure because the health and *moral* of these troops had sapped away. A grave error was made in 1914 when Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War instead of Haldane.

From the very beginning I was enthusiastically in favour of the War. The foul, bestial outrages of the German soldiers in Belgium aroused my indignation and fury. The man who hesitated to fight these vile, unspeakable modern Huns, was, for me, the unclean thing – the supreme coward ! I toured Wicklow in Lord Powerscourt's motor-car, reviewing the Volunteers and exhorting them to fight for their old allies, the French, against the Germans who were trampling upon the graves of our brave 'Wild Geese,' the Irish Brigade of Ramillies and Fontenoy. At Bray, I received faint support, but, further afield, I was met with sullen looks and protests. At Arklow, a school-teacher, a man who received his emoluments directly from the English taxpayer, shouted : 'Not so much against the Germans ! 'Tis the English who are our enemies and always will be; to Hell with them !' He was cheered to the echo, and I was howled down !

A few days later, I was lunching with the Lord Mayor of Dublin at the Dolphin; he spoke of the War as a matter quite foreign to his interests and sympathies. The news of the defeat and retreat of the French and British armies was being discussed. 'You'll see,' said he, with a grin of satisfaction, 'it will be 1870 over again, the Prussians will be in Paris in a week.'

Even the gentry, the landed caste, never felt the War in Ireland as their analogous class did in France or England: their women never suffered the same anguish, experienced the same pride, nor made the same sacrifices; their men went about their business or their pleasures unconcerned; there was no God of Battles to steel their soldiers' hearts!

The contemplation of Irish antipathy and unconcern caused a tremendous revulsion of feelings in me; while, by way of adding fuel to the fire, a typical ward-politician insulted me one day in the smoking-room of the Dolphin Hotel; the fellow had a face flushed with potations, a waxed moustache, a sacred amulet suspended round his neck, and blasphemy upon his lips.

There is no doubt that the outbreak of the Great War gave my mind a jolt. I pondered all these things in my heart, and while I was musing the fire burned within me! Hateful little episodes, acts of treachery and cruelty on the part of the Irish, which had happened while I was on my tours of inspection of the Volunteers in County Wicklow occurred to my mind. I remembered, too, that the gunmen and 'heelers' in America when I was there were all Irishmen. Again and again I thrust these thoughts behind me, refusing to be disillusioned! My six days spent on Myles's yacht had not been agreeable; I had found myself out of sympathy with the ideals and objects of my fellow-conspirators: my ways were not their ways. Seven years afterwards, when I was doing duty in Dublin Castle as an Intelligence officer, a letter written in 1914 by one of these yachting companions to his mother fell into my hands; in it, I was held up to ridicule and it was clear that the man disliked me, although in those days he used often to be my guest.

During the Home Rule campaign, I had protested against the publication of a gross falsehood which I had discovered in one of the pamphlets issued by the United Irish League; it was a quotation from a speech really made by Shiel, but

alleged to have been made by the Iron Duke during the debates in 1828 on Catholic Emancipation. While admitting it to be untrue, the League continued to exploit the false quotation. 'Let them prove that Wellington never said it !' argued a prominent member of the Irish Party.

Ireland is a small, poor country with little scope for the Irishman aspiring to be a superman; so, as a rule, he seeks his fortune abroad. Only the third-class brains remain at home. Even allowing for this, I was struck with the mediocrity of those ambitious to enter public life in the new days which they hoped were dawning for them in Ireland. I was disappointed at their vulgar, ignorant characters; above all at their extreme pettiness – their jealousy and hatred of any one who had achieved some small measure of success.

Sir Horace Plunkett's work in Ireland has accomplished much for agriculture, nevertheless he was thwarted at every turn by the jealous and covetous nationalist politicians ever eager, notwithstanding, to cringe to the gombeen-men whose patronage they desired.

The wretched Irish politicians regarded the Great War as an exasperating interruption of their paltry, factional parish feuds. They seemed to me to be too petty to be capable of tolerating a really great, wise man as leader over them.

In the course of a conversation with the town clerk, a Mr. Campbell, who had been a secretary to Parnell, I ventured to remark that I feared that if Parnell had actually won his Home Rule measure, and had taken up the Government of Ireland, he might have been murdered in six months.

'You're wrong, sir !' he retorted. "'Tis not six months he'd have lasted: they'd have shot him in six weeks !'

In those days, when I was feeling so enthusiastic in the cause of France and England and so resentful of Irish apathy – I almost dare say hostility – I often recalled my grandfather's loathing and contempt for the Irish.

What if he should have been right? In his fierce, uncharitable way, he was so often right!

I was coming round to the opinion that the best blood was drained out of Ireland when the 'Wild Geese' flew away.

The first reports which trickled through the censor's office were surprising: the Belgian Army, fighting with magnificent heroism, was holding up the German hosts in the most unexpected fashion. A study of Ludendorff's reminiscences will reveal how astonished the Germans were at the stubbornness and valour of the Belgians' defence of their country, and how anxious their resistance made him. Making the most skilful use of their admirable railway system to give extra mobility to their troops, they were able to assemble superior forces for encountering the German patrols. Whenever the Germans came in contact with the Belgians, they found themselves heavily engaged; what were thought to be mere outlying pickets fought like battalions.

Fear is the greatest incentive to cruelty. The German soldiers during the first days of their invasion of Belgium were in constant terror, so that, in senseless, barbarous fashion, they took revenge for their humiliation upon the defenceless civilians, 6,034 of whom were murdered by these unspeakable modern Huns, and, of these, 165 were women and 57 were young children, seven of whom were under two years of age.

The heinous outrages on humanity practised by the Germans were simply not believed in Ireland; nay, they were described as 'the usual English lies!' – even by priests who had been educated at the University of Louvain and must have had friends amongst the unfortunate Belgian refugees. Indeed, I know of a case of a little girl, the daughter of a refugee, who was being cared for in a convent near Dublin, during the winter of 1914, and who was actually taught by the nuns to tell people that the outrages were due to the French, although of course there could not have been any French in Belgium. I heard this little girl, aged six years,

say to some friends of mine: 'We Flemish hate the French, as you Irish hate the English !'

The first news of our own soldiers which came through, a fortnight later, was that they were in full retreat, having been roughly handled at Mons and Le Cateau. One rumour, started by the Irish, gloating over our misfortunes, averred that all discipline and formation had been lost and that our men were falling back, a mere rabble ! Another described Sir John French as fleeing to Havre to re-embark the broken remnants of his five divisions. A third declared that Lord Kitchener had personally visited all the wounded in the English hospitals, on arrival, and had told them that if they spoke a word about events in France, they would be brought to trial by court-martial.

Now, it was impossible to exaggerate the serious turn events had taken in France: read what Sir John French himself has said in his journal: '*The hope of making a stand behind the Somme or the Oise, or any other favourable position north of the Marne had now to be abandoned, owing to the shattered condition of the army, and the far-reaching effect of our losses at the Battle of Le Cateau was felt seriously even throughout the subsequent Battle of the Marne, and during the early operations on the Aisne. It was not possible to replace our lost guns and machine-guns until nearly the end of September.*'

Nevertheless, what embittered me was the satisfaction with which these rumours of disaster were eagerly accepted as true in Ireland. The truth was, of course, that Smith-Dorrien's divisions had been shattered at Le Cateau; it was only on the Seine on the 4th of September, after a brief respite from their exhausting retreat, that they received reinforcements to replace their casualties; indeed, they barely recovered their *moral* on the Aisne, more than a month later.

As an example of the coolness and valour of our regimental officers, I must digress to relate the following anecdote of the retreat. Captain Potter, of the Liverpool Regiment,

a battalion which never lost its discipline in the most trying hours, was lying behind a haystack controlling the fire of his company, when General Monro approached him.

‘How are you getting on?’ he enquired.

‘Famously, sir!’ answered Potter. ‘We are holding the enemy.’

‘Don’t you usually stand up to address a general?’ added Monro tartly.

‘I do as a rule, sir,’ replied Potter, ‘but now I am shot through both legs.’

The campaign of August and September 1914 was seen in false perspective at the time in England and Ireland, owing to the stupid secrecy of the censor.

The situation, although extremely critical, was not quite as black as it was painted in Ireland. Notwithstanding the faulty French plan of operations in the beginning and the heavy casualties due to the fighting instructions laid down in the French manuals, which prescribed utterly reckless assaults in the open with the bayonet against barbed-wire and machine-guns, the *moral* of the French soldiers remained excellent. In spite of the failure of the French offensives in Alsace, at Morange, and in the Ardennes, the determination of the French people was quite unshaken; and Joffre was showing that he was equal to the occasion, his sublime calm and equanimity inspiring alike with confidence his troops and the French nation.

This is not the place to describe the campaign on the Marne, but I have made this digression because, without explaining the exact situation, it is impossible to show how mischievous were the attempts of the Irish to misrepresent it, and how hostile they were to the English, the French, and the Belgians. It might have been supposed that the Irish would have acclaimed the heroism of the Belgians, who by their valour and skill held up the German invasion for eight precious days. It might have been thought that the Catholic Irish would have been moved into compassion for

the sufferings of the Catholic Belgians being ground under the heel of the Lutheran invader ; but in the Irish soul there is always more room for hatred than for love, and in 1914 hatred for England was the prevailing sentiment.

Lord Kitchener having insisted on all news from the front being hidden from the public, the Irish sneered and proclaimed : 'The truth is held back, because the English have been beaten !'

CHAPTER XIV

BACK TO THE ARMY AGAIN

To reap the harvest of perpetual peace
By this one bloody trial of sharp war.

Richard III, Act V, scene ii.

A FEW days after the outbreak of hostilities, I wrote to the War Office to offer my services; but I did not receive an answer for many weeks, and in the meantime I met an old contemporary of mine in Dublin who informed me that he had had an interview in London with the adjutant-general, who had told him that retired officers of our age were not required. I was in my forty-fifth year, and too old for the Reserve of Officers, so the only thing to be done was to circumvent the regulations, or to join the new, so-called Kitchener Army.

Meeting T. W. Russell, the Minister for Agriculture and Technical Education in Ireland, I asked him what was the opinion of the Government as to the probable duration of the War.

‘It will be over by Christmas !’ he asserted.

‘You don’t mean to say you think that we will be defeated by then ?’ I enquired.

‘Oh, no,’ he added, ‘but it must come to an end through economic pressure.’

My own view was that Prussia had fought one seven years’ war and was fully capable of fighting another, so that, if the War were to come to an end within a twelvemonth, it could only be through the defeat of the armies of Russia, France, and England.

The first unit of the Kitchener Armies to be formed in Ireland was the 10th Division; and to my delight I heard

that my old friend and comrade of the Boer War, Charles FitzClarence, V.C., had been chosen to be one of its brigadier-generals. I lost no time in calling on him at the Curragh, with a view to trying to obtain some military employment through him; because my dread was that I might be appointed a Railway Transport Officer through the War Office, whereas my ambition was for regimental duty. FitzClarence gave me a hearty welcome, and, under an order issued two days previously, offered to post me as a captain in one of his battalions. The aforesaid order prescribed that after a month's probation on the receipt of a favourable report from my commanding officer, I might be confirmed in my rank.

It is a trite saying that it is as well to be off with the old love before you are on with the new; so I explained that Colonel Moore had offered me the command of one of the Irish Volunteer Regiments when they were incorporated in the Kitchener divisions.

'Oh!' said FitzClarence, 'K. of K. won't hear of that scheme; he has set his face against all idea of Irish Volunteer Regiments – the Boer War gave him a dislike of scallywags. There will be only battalions of the regular regimental establishments in this war.'

Nevertheless, not feeling it right to join the 10th Division until I had severed my connection with the Volunteers, I begged FitzClarence to give me twenty-four hours to think over his offer, and this he very kindly agreed to do.

Returning to Dublin, I resigned my appointment as inspector of the Wicklow Volunteers, and wrote accepting a commission as captain in the 7th Dublin Fusiliers. Thus, for the third time in my life, I was back in the Army again.

When I had joined up for the Boer War, it was in the field, to all intents and purposes under fire, that I took up my duties; but at the Curragh I found myself once more in the old routine: recruits' drill on the square, barrack

inspections and meals in the officers' mess: it seemed very strange after five and twenty years' absence.

The first thing I learned on joining was that FitzClarence had left for the front to take over the 1st Guards Brigade. I never saw my old friend again. After saving the English line on the 31st of October, when, through his initiative and soldierly grasp of the perilous situation, the Germans were driven out of the village of Gheluvelt, he died a most heroic death on the 11th of November, 1914. The Prussian Guard had again broken the English line and, when this was reported to FitzClarence by his brigade major, he rose to his feet and said: 'The time has come for the Guards to attack!'

'Shall I order them to advance, sir?' enquired the staff officer.

'No, I cannot bear to send word to my old comrades to go forward,' rejoined the general. 'I will go and lead them myself!'

And he fell leading them: a task which at that critical conjuncture, when the very cause of humanity was trembling in the balance, it was his duty to perform. When Charles FitzClarence fell, the English Army lost the noblest, bravest soldier who ever wore the King's uniform. His fine figure and handsome face were the outward indications of the stout, noble heart within him.

In the 7th Dublins we had a company recruited from the Irish Rugby football clubs: these were the finest set of youths I have ever seen! I regard an Irish gentleman as the salt of the earth, and when he is a Rugby football player he is the supreme type of what a man should be. These men should have all been made officers: it was a wicked waste of the best material to leave them in the ranks. I had the luck to command this company for a few weeks and the good fortune to be in command on the day when some officials,

including the secretary, Frank Browning, of the Irish Rugby Football Union, came down to the Curragh to visit their old comrades. We spent a joyous, enthusiastic day playing, or watching, their great game, and these gallant fellows were so courteous as to elect me an honorary member for life of the Irish Rugby Football Union. I am very proud of my little brass badge with its enamelled shamrocks, and I always sport it in my buttonhole when I attend an international Rugger match.

For four months we all trained zealously on the Curragh, eagerly looking forward to the day when we might be sent to France to fight for our great cause. We had many Welsh miners in our battalion, as recruiting amongst the Irish hung fire and it was impossible to fill our ranks with Irishmen. There were many changes in the executive posts; but finally I settled down in command of a company of real 'toughs': men enlisted on the Dublin quays, many of whom were Larkinites enticed to join the colours by the prospect of good food and pay, which were welcome to them after months of semi-starvation during the great strike of 1913 and 1914. A ludicrous mistake was made in allowing such men to be trained within easy access of Dublin, where they were continually exposed to the blandishments of anti-English agitators, so that there were innumerable cases of absence without leave or desertion, and discipline suffered.

I wrote privately to senior officers with whom I was personally acquainted, amongst others to Lord Roberts and Sir E. Bethune, exhorting them to have all Irish soldiers transferred to England for training and to have the Irish barracks and quarters filled with Scottish or English troops; but my appeals fell on deaf ears. How much suffering and how many valuable lives might have been saved during the dark years of the Sinn Fein Revolution it is impossible to compute, had my advice been taken!

In February 1915 we moved to the Royal Barracks in Dublin, being relieved by a battalion of the Irish Rifles who

were in need of the better facilities for training afforded by the Curragh of Kildare.

News from the front was slowly trickling through: we heard that our brave fellows had passed a terrible winter on the Yser, sometimes standing waist high in mud and water for hours at a stretch to withstand the German assaults. We learned that it was the superb shooting of our troops which had saved the situation; so we concentrated all our attention on training our men to rapid and accurate firing.

The English Army has always been renowned for its shooting: Crecy and Poitiers were won by the fire of the English bowmen. The Peninsular battles were gained by the deadly musketry of the English Infantry. When the English were beaten by the French, it was usually, as at Steinkerque, because the French were able to get to close quarters with the bayonet.

All the officers at home on leave from the front spoke of the tremendous efficiency of the German Artillery, most of our losses in battle being due to high explosive shells. They reported that the range of the enemy's guns was corrected by signals from aeroplanes, and one and all complained of our shortage of Artillery ammunition.

Prince Alexander of Teck (the present Earl of Athlone) told me that Lord Kitchener, in a conversation with him, bewailed the constant demands for more ammunition: 'I am always being pestered for more shells,' he grumbled. 'In the old days the English soldier used to rely on his bayonet.'

'Nowadays,' wittily retorted the Prince, 'the English bayonet is about a hundred yards too short !'

During the month of March I heard disquieting rumours: I was told in strict confidence that the 10th Division were not destined for France, but were to be despatched to the East. Now my zeal to join up for the War had been entirely due to my desire to go and fight for France on French soil; so that the idea of having to take part in a campaign against

Austrians, Turks, or Bulgars was most distasteful to me. I must confess that, other international complications being ignored, in a war between Austria and Italy my sympathies would have been entirely with Austria; in a war between Turkey and Greece, my sympathies would have been with the Turks. Indeed, I shrewdly suspect that of all our allies I only cared for France: I should have been unmoved had the others been beaten! Thus the news that the 10th Division was bound for the East caused me acute anxiety, and I set to work to try to obtain an exchange. Learning that Artillery officers were badly needed, I made an application and obtained a transfer to the Royal Field Artillery of the 16th Irish Division, so that by the middle of March I found myself at Kilkenny commanding the ammunition column of the 75th Royal Field Artillery Brigade under Colonel Thackeray, a veteran of the Afghan War of 1878.

I look back on the few months spent in Kilkenny as amongst the pleasantest of my life. The Castle Morres estate near Knocktopher had, at that time, been in our family since the days of Strongbow; and some cousins of mine living there showed me kindness and hospitality. The place has since been seized by Sinn Feiners, many of whom, descended from Cromwell's soldiers, have the effrontery to pretend that, because they have adopted the sloth, improvidence, and degrading superstitions of the Celts, they are more Irish than we are. Castle Morres has been sold to a German baron by those whose proud boast it is that Ireland shall be for the Irish alone!

We had the greatest difficulty in training our men to be gunners and drivers, as we had neither guns, dial-sights, directors, nor harness for the horses; but all ranks, being keen, soon learnt map-reading and laying out lines of fire with compasses, such improvised instruments as we could devise, and a precious theodolite. We had horses and saddles, too, so, though we could not practise driving, we

had plenty of riding, and the non-commissioned officers and men were trained in stable-work. When at last a few sets of harness arrived, I had to mount and myself act as lead or wheel-driver, while the recruits were learning to be jehus. I found the men pleasant and easy to manage after the 'toughs' of A Company of the Dublin Fusiliers, and we had literally no crime. In point of fact, there were hardly any Irish in the Field Artillery of the 16th Division, with the exception of three or four officers of that splendid landed class which furnished Wellington with his best regimental officers.

In Kilkenny all was so calm and peaceful that it was impossible to believe that a bloody contest was being waged in France: everyone appeared aloof from, and unconcerned in, the mighty struggle; the talk was continually of racing, hunting, or the price of cattle. The great events, even the sinking of the *Lusitania*, hardly touched the emotions of our neighbours, notwithstanding the corpses being washed up from the wreck on the Irish shore. Nevertheless, one day I heard a farmer, while paying into his bank a huge wad of greasy notes, the proceeds of the sale of his cattle at inflated prices, remark to the cashier: 'Sure! the Germans had every right to sink the *Lusitania*. Hadn't she Artillery harness and shell cases in her hold for the English Army?' From which observation it was not difficult to infer that propagandism was being carried on by the Germans under our very noses. What could an illiterate peasant know about shell cases?

Suddenly and unexpectedly, towards the end of June 1915, we received notice that we were to be transferred to the Guards Division being newly formed in France, and were to become, accordingly, the Guards Divisional Artillery. We soon found ourselves in a different atmosphere on Salisbury Plain, where we were sent to mobilise for the front, and, during the month of July 1915 at Larkhill, equipment was literally shovelled into us and remounts were distributed in

bewildering numbers to the section commanders. Dial-sights had to be adjusted, gunlayers instructed, gunners taught to shoot; all within a month! Harness, too, had to be fitted, horse-teams sorted, and drivers practised in the handling of their mounts. All ranks were keen, however, and we used to be up at dawn to manœuvre and exercise the battery. How often, I wonder, while contemplating the rosy tints of sunrise on Stonehenge, did I not apostrophise six unruly horses which had overpowered their unskilled, but ardent, drivers? – ‘Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds . . . such a wagoner as Phaeton would whip you to the west.’

No one but an ignoramus could expect gunners and drivers, on such a perfunctory training, to rise to the standards of perfection demanded of our expert regular Horse and Field Artillery after years of instruction; nevertheless, the generals reviewing us were very exacting. During the course of the War I was often inspected on Salisbury Plain, when in command of units formed from the rawest of human material – with shoeing-smiths, for instance, who, three brief months before, had been haberdashers’ assistants – yet I never remember hearing a word of encouragement from one of these martinets who, when they themselves had taken over their batteries in their day, had assumed command of going concerns with veteran N.C.O.s, experienced farriers, seasoned drivers and numbers one competent to make the command run like a piece of well-oiled machinery. I never had the good fortune, however, to be reviewed by General van Straubenzee, who earned a reputation for always having a word of encouragement for the novice and was more prompt to quizz than to find fault, who knew that the worst way to teach a man his job is to bully and frighten him! Nevertheless, the scolding, blustering, fault-finding type of general was far too common in the English Army: he was I suppose, the soldiers’ heritage from that grotesque Falstaff, all paunch, scowls, and oaths, who inspected me when I was a Woolwich cadet in 1886.

In the second week in August 1915 we were hurried off to France. The skill and rapidity with which guns, men, and horses were embarked at Southampton greatly impressed me: these embarkation tasks were organised and superintended for the most part by retired officers who, one and all, were eating out their hearts because they might not themselves stand in the breach and sacrifice their brave lives for Old England.

As we steamed out of Southampton Water during the after-glow, the appearance of the Solent was strangely awe-inspiring to one familiar with its usual gay, brilliant aspect during August: the customary crowd of gaily dressed yachts, sparkling with lanterns, had vanished, and the grimly dark forms of warships, slipping from their moorings to escort us to France, cast a deep shadow of dread athwart our souls. Not a light could be seen, not a sound heard; the very ripples on the tideway were cut by the sharp line of a boom closing the entrance to Spithead from the Needles.

Out in the Channel, as the black, glistening form of a buoy whirled past, bobbing and dancing on the waves, I started involuntarily: might that not have been a deadly contact-mine which we had almost grazed? The shadow of fear was daunting my spirit.

CHAPTER XV

OFF TO THE WAR

Beau chevalier qui partez pour la guerre,
Qu'allez-vous faire
Si loin d'ici ?

Voyez-vous pas que la nuit est profonde,
Et que le monde
N'est que souci ?

ALFRED DE MUSSET

THE disembarkation at Havre, the long, dreary day spent on the quay, the entrainment and railway journey to St. Omer were uneventful, and it was not until we had entered Artois that we heard the guns at the front for the first time, but from then the hammer of the artillery never ceased for a single instant throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, and day after day it was the same.

We detrained in the middle of the night at a small siding near St. Omer, being forbidden to show any light, and it was amazing how skilfully our fellows contrived in the pitch dark to get the horses sorted into teams, the teams hooked in, and the battery lined up on the road in column of route.

General Goulburn, the C.R.A. Guards Division, sent for me, and in a tiny hut, by the light of an electric torch, showed me the route I had to march. 'Study the map carefully,' he warned me, 'and try to carry it in your head, because you are forbidden to show so much as a spark on the road; there must be no striking of matches; you must not even allow your men to smoke !'

I was then in command of D Battery, 75th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, which consisted of four eighteen-pounder

guns, eight ammunition wagons, a general-service wagon, a water-cart, and a battery cart. My orders were by no means easy to carry out, as I had to lead my command through a network of lanes and roads in the pitch dark to our first bivouac, some sixteen miles distant; and, as it was my first job in France, I felt very anxious. Although I lost my way once, and, becoming involved in a narrow lane, had to unlimber guns and wagons in order to return on my tracks, mine was the first battery to arrive at the rendezvous. The men were all very sleepy, but the horses were fresh and well. We had suffered singularly few of the minor casualties which arise on a march: hardly a horse was lame or chafed, hardly a shoe was cast, and my own charger – which I had named *Flipotte*, but which the drivers insisted on calling *Polly* – was stepping as light as a starling across the meadows glistening with dew in the rosy light of dawn. It being Sunday, we passed a quiet day, the men lolling about in the barns and outhouses of a farm, cleaning themselves and polishing their harness. There was a mill and a stream hard by our bivouac, and during the afternoon I watched an officer fishing for trout, gazed upon the late summer butterflies hovering above the meadowsweet, and altogether felt as peaceful and as remote from war as the distant thunder of the guns would permit.

During the next two days, we marched by Théroutanne, Aire, Hazebrouck, Vieux Berquin to Estaires-La-Gorgue, where we formed wagon-lines for the ammunition columns, the guns going into the line at Laventie. On the march I got into the black books of the brigade commander for having taken a short cut which brought my battery to the head of the column. The reprimand I incurred embittered me and forbode ill for the future.

My first position in the firing line was at Croix Blanche, a farm where I had a comfortable billet. The farmer's two daughters, pretty, graceful girls in their teens, went about their tasks in the house, the dairy, or poultry-yard as if there

were no such thing as a German in the world, although shells fell daily in the orchard, and bullets often sang through the trees – indeed, our first casualty occurred in the garden.

Just as the young elephant is harnessed beside an old one in order that he may grow familiar with his duties, so we were stationed by sections in the line alongside a war-experienced battery in action. The guns were all in pits or epaulements, carefully screened from the view of passing aeroplanes; but the need for sound, firm platforms was a cause of continual anxiety to gunners, because, in the course of firing, the wheels and trails of field-pieces tended to plough themselves into inconvenient holes and furrows in the soft ground.

My first tour through the trenches to the forward observation post impressed me greatly. I was conducted across several meadows which formed the foreground of our field of fire to the communication trench, which dipped underground amongst the ruins of a devastated hamlet. As we passed between the shattered brick buildings, I heard an ominous rat-tat-tat; my guide, giving me a warning push, dived behind the plinth of a crucifix which dominated the cross-roads; bullets seemed to buzz around me like a swarm of angry bees and rattled against such walls as were standing; a tile or two came clinking down from a neighbouring roof, and some flakes of plaster, detaching themselves from a pink-washed cow-shed, fluttered on the breeze and settled as dust on my shoulders. In the jargon of trench warfare, the enemy had put down a machine-gun barrage in the hope, presumably, of catching the afternoon reliefs on their way to the front.

The communication trenches were deep, narrow, and zigzagged, so that I felt in a maze: nothing being visible but the grey sky above me; nothing audible but the pip-pop of the sharpshooters, ever alert, or the thud of a distant gun; once the deafening crash of a salvo made me start, so close and unexpected were the reports, and half-a-dozen

shells whined their way to the enemy overhead. When I had begun to fancy that I should be tramping along those duckboards for ever, a sinner doomed to an eternal treadmill, the communication trench suddenly debouched into a neat alley, better constructed, better maintained with revetments, having a firestep, traverses, and here and there dark caverns, the entrances to shell-proof shelters, descending into the very bowels of the earth; across these caverns hung curtains of blankets, smelling strongly of ammonia, designed to protect the inmates of the dug-outs from the effects of the much-dreaded gas. I realised at once that I was in the fire-trench, on the very brink of no man's land. No man's land to me was awe-inspiring, its dreary horror indescribable; I felt that I only caught my brief glimpse of it through the tangle of our rusty wire, at the gravest peril to my life. Across a strip of deserted ground, pock-marked with shell-holes, I viewed the long, low bank of freshly turned earth, torn and scratched by shell-bursts, and protected by meshes, coils, and hoops of barbed wire, higher and more formidable than our own, which marked the German line. In the midst of this melancholy belt of rough land, so continuously tortured and raked by bullets and shells that the sorriest weed might not grow there, I noticed a derelict plough tilting its handles upwards as though supplicating Heaven – an emblem of peace amidst all these tokens of war. Here and there a bundle of rags marked the spot where the corpse of a warrior – 'missing, presumed killed' – was rotting, incredibly shrunken and half hidden by the inequalities of the ground. Startlingly close, hanging doubled up on our wire, was a hideous scarecrow, the mortal remains of some brave, unconquerable spirit; its arms, swinging stiffly, were jerked about like any poor puppet's whenever gusts of fire shook our entanglements. A faint sickly smell hung on the air, lending additional horror to the mournful atmosphere.

Nothing surprised me so much as to find the front line

occupied in such strength; indeed, it was our main line of battle, whereas I had expected to see it held as merely an outpost line. In the latter period of the war we amended our tactics, and only outlying pickets were maintained in close proximity to the enemy.

In the fire-trench I saw plenty of animation, and the irrepressible cheeriness of Tommy Atkins was abundantly manifest. Two Light Infantrymen were roaring with laughter: the mirror of their improvised periscope had just been shattered by a bullet, and the mirror was a borrowed shaving glass! Somewhere, too, in the abandoned dower house of the village, a top hat had been discovered a week previously, and, by the aid of this precious find, a practical joke had been devised and was being played upon the dull-witted Pomeranians facing our lads. A memorandum, giving information that a certain prominent French politician purposed visiting the brave English soldiers in the front line on a particular date, had been cunningly dropped in the enemy's trench during a raid. That very day was the date of the pretended visit, and our Tommies were gleefully bearing aloft the top hat on the butt of a rifle as I passed along; they moved slowly across the whole sector, occasionally stopping and mimicking such gestures as might be communicated to his silken headgear by the most eloquent of orators. The hat was riddled with bullets when I saw it.

At last I reached a place where in a recess two of our signallers were operating a field telephone in connection with our battery position, and so I tested the system by ranging half a dozen rounds upon a datum point in the German line, observing the practice by kneeling on the fire-step and squinting between two sandbags. This I found to be a disagreeable job, because for the first ten minutes every bullet which sang over my head seemed to be aimed at me. My next move was to the rear, back to a group of buildings battered by fire in the support line, where, from the roof of

a ruined villa, most of the observation of our fire on the Auber ridge was carried out. Peeping through the cracks and crannies of the multi-coloured tiled roof, I was startled at the proximity of the enemy – indeed, I could see Germans moving about freely, and it seemed impossible that my presence could escape detection. I actually saw men pointing at me, or seeming to do so ! My signallers with their telephone were ensconced inside the building, and I had to shout my directions down to them from the roof. Altogether, I gathered the impression that observation of artillery fire was jumpy work, though, like everything else in life, one grows accustomed to the danger, just as eels grow accustomed to being skinned !

After ten days at Laventie, the Guards Divisional Artillery moved to Béthune, in anticipation of the Battle of Loos. Here, much to my disappointment, I was ordered to take over an ammunition column with wagon-lines at Annequin. I felt aggrieved at having my battery taken from me, and I brought my case before the G.O.C. of the division, but I had little support from my brigade commander and I was snubbed by Lord Cavan, who resented my offer to serve in the Infantry of the division, as that Infantry was the Guards. I should like to remind my readers that Napoleon Buona-parté, as a young officer, flatly refused to be reduced from the Artillery to the Infantry.

At Annequin there were mine-shafts, and a tremendous pyramid of slag from which a fine view of the fighting could be obtained. I often saw the Prince of Wales there. From the top of this dump, one morning, I witnessed a superb combat between a German and four British aeroplanes. All five soared, dived, and swooped in the most graceful curves, like gigantic sea-birds in quest of their prey, to the accompaniment of a ceaseless drumming of machine-guns and a whirr of engines. The German put up a desperate resistance for half an hour, being finally forced to the ground ; but the German won all the honours of the duel.

The Battle of Loos was fought in the midst of the great coal-basin of northern France – a hideous, dreary country. To make up for the shortage of available Artillery to cover an attack on a front of six divisions, the offensive opened with an intense bombardment lasting four days; the 4th Corps in the line having more than 250 guns at its disposal, including 36 howitzers of eight inches' calibre or more, while some French heavy batteries co-operated. Thus the thunder of the cannon never ceased day or night; it was deafening, and the windows in Béthune and the mining villages rattled continuously without a moment's respite. I believe these prolonged Artillery preparations were a mistake, as they gave notice of our intention to attack, and the factor of surprise, so precious in an offensive, was lost! The essence of effective Artillery attack is its concentration in time as well as in space; results being calculated on a study of the known patterns which can be made by many guns firing on zones of given dimensions. It is quite possible to fire all day at an object with a single gun and never hit it, because a gun's range increases with the heating of its barrel, and varies with the temperature and pressures of the surrounding atmosphere, not to mention the influence of the wind. The effect of 200 guns, each firing five rounds at a target – such a bombardment lasting a few minutes – is immeasurably greater than that of 10 guns firing one hundred rounds each, during several hours on the same target. At Loos, moreover, our guns were not carefully calibrated; thus it was assumed that an old, worn-out gun could range as far, and as accurately, as a new weapon. Nor was the supply of ammunition well organised; it being neither tested nor sorted into lots according to the date and place of its manufacture, so that an unfortunate battery commander might find himself supplied with a mixture of American-made, Woolwich-made, and Newcastle-made cartridges and a varied assortment of fuses.

The lamentable truth was that, before the War, the

English Field Artillery had neglected the science of gunnery, and attached an exaggerated importance to turn-out, horse-management, and march-discipline. These qualities are of very great value both in peace and war, but in war-time the supreme test is accurate shooting: those gunners are the best who are the deadliest – who can slay the greatest numbers of the enemy. Unhappily our Field Artillery never won the confidence of our Infantry as the French Artillery won the confidence of theirs. The English Field Artillery had been trained to rely solely upon ranging under observation of fire to prepare for, and ensure accuracy in bombardments, and thereby the positions and numbers of the guns were revealed to the enemy and all hope of affecting a surprise – that most precious element in any attack – was lost. Général Maurin, a very distinguished Artilleryman, who in 1934 became *Ministre de la Guerre*, issued a memorandum to the French Artillery in which he wrote: ‘The words, ranging and registering, should be banished from the lexicon of all well-trained Artillery.’ Moreover, a gun hot from firing will range further than a cold gun, so, in spite of the thousands of rounds expended in ranging, our infantrymen were continually lodging complaints that our shells (fired from cold guns) were falling amongst them – the most demoralising calamity in battle which can befall both the infantry and the gunners supporting them.

Astride his red horse, the grim spectre of war proclaims his arrival with the crash and roar of firing, which persists without a lull during a battle. Within a radius of many miles the air vibrates with the concussions: every window rattling ceaselessly in its frame; all foliage quivering and trembling as if in terror. Deafening and nerve-shattering, the explosions close at hand pierce the ear with painful, searing stabs, stunning the brain. The discrete fury of the machine-guns’ *staccato*, the drumming rifle-fire, or the pumping throbs of Field Artillery are well-defined sounds against

a distant background of rumbling, muttering cannon, inchoate in apocalyptic thunders: torturing the brown earth and hammering on the vault of Heaven.

Loos was the first battle in which we employed gas; phosgene, or chlorine, mixed with smoke, was released, in clouds, from cylinders placed at intervals along the fire-trench, at zero hour on the 25th of September. On the front of the 15th Division the wind was at first very favourable, but further north it was variable, and by no means blowing directly towards the enemy; unfortunately, too, the breeze veering round blew back the gas into the faces of our troops, who suffered many casualties from it, even in the 15th Division. Taking into consideration the stubborn resistance to the advance of the Scottish Brigades where our poison-fumes were perhaps the most deadly, I have little hesitation in declaring that they were of no assistance whatever to our progress. I watched the Germans igniting straw on the parapet of their front-line trenches, so that the heat of the flames might cause the approaching gas to rise and disperse. Their officers walked to and fro, exposing themselves to the intense fire with sublime courage and indifference to danger. Zero hour was at 5.50 a.m., and as the poison-vapour and smoke drifted across the German line the fire from our guns redoubled in fury; the whole of the enemy's position became veiled in a dense white fog as thick as wool, which the bright bursts of our exploding shrapnel tore and rent with scarlet gashes.

The valour of the 15th Division moved me deeply. Nothing could stop them; on they pressed like the unconquerable Fusiliers at Albuera, capturing Loos and the slopes of Hill 70. Lanes had been cut through our entanglements to enable our fellows to advance, and as the Scots went over the top of the parapet they deliberately walked forward under a hail of bullets. A Highlander was seen to stop and disentangle his kilt from the barbed wire. I passed over the ground after the battle: it was thickly strewn with their dead; the

division lost, that day, 6,600 killed and wounded out of a fighting strength of 19,000.

The stout defence of the enemy, too, compelled my admiration; except in front of the Scottish regiments, the Germans held their ground everywhere. To their right and their left, on the fronts of the British 1st and 47th Divisions, they only yielded at unimportant points. The key of their whole position was the Hohenzollern Redoubt, to the north of the 1st Division, inasmuch as from it the entire British trench system could be overlooked and dominated by the enemy. The Hohenzollern Redoubt proved to be impregnable, resisting repeated assaults up till the 13th of October, and finally all hope of capturing it was abandoned. Many of our brave fellows met their deaths in the Hairpin Trench in front of the Redoubt.

The failure of the 1st Division to carry the Bois de Hugo, moreover, was fatal to our ultimate success, because the 15th Division, in advancing, uncovered its left, and was attacked by the Germans on that flank, from the wood.

Although we, the Gunners, were in action throughout the battle, the Infantry of the Guards Division were in reserve at Saily La Bourse, and were only brought forward during the evening of the 26th of September, when the 21st Division failed to relieve the Highlanders holding the ground won by them at Hill 70, on the 25th, by desperate fighting. The 21st Division had been hurried to France to take part in the operations at Loos – a somewhat severe ordeal for raw troops. Through lack of discipline, the men had given away or consumed their iron rations on their long journey to the front from their port of disembarkation; thus they reached the fighting zone tired, hungry, and shaken in *moral*.

From 2 p.m. until midnight on the 25th, our hold on Hill 70 was in jeopardy, as the Germans were fiercely counter-attacking from the crest in front, and the Bois de Hugo on our left flank. After seventeen hours of ceaseless battle, the Cameron Highlanders, worn out, reduced to thirty per cent

of their fighting strength, their intrepid Colonel Douglas Hamilton, V.C., dead, were nevertheless clinging tenaciously to the slopes of Hill 70, bloody but unbowed.

Through our dead and wounded, under an intense barrage of German shell-fire and torrents of rain, the 21st Division were marched forward to the support of the Cameron men: more trying conditions cannot be imagined for troops experiencing their baptism of fire. The strain was too great: the advance of the 21st Division was brought to a standstill. At 9 a.m. on the 26th of September, I myself saw fugitives, who had cast away their arms, equipment, and even their gas-masks, streaming away down the Loos-Philosophe Road. I was told by some of them that the Germans were back in Loos: this, of course, was untrue!

Such had been their ignorance of the true situation, and of the nature of the support required of them, that the 21st Division had actually advanced their first-line transport through Philosophe – nearly as far as Quality Street – and this caused so great a congestion on the highway that bicycle orderlies could not force themselves a passage through the throng, and one, who unwisely had left the paved road in the hope of being able to skirt round the mob, found his motor-cycle so clogged with mud in a ploughed field that he was compelled to abandon it. This motor-cycle was recovered by some N.C.O.s and men of a battery of the Guards Division, and was treasured by them throughout the War.

The whole situation appeared in grave peril during the 26th, but, with superhuman endurance, the Cameron Highlanders, who had witnessed in despair the rout of the 21st Division, still clung on to the slopes of Hill 70, and the 6th Cavalry Brigade, having been dismounted, were hurried forward to Loos, and stiffened the line pending the arrival of the Guards from Sailly La Bourse.

In defence of the behaviour of the 21st Division, it has been pleaded that its units were composed of raw recruits

with only one year's service; but it must be borne in mind that in a conscript army – such as the German – the whole period of any conscript's training was only two years, so that all the German effectives brought into the firing line at any time – apart from the reserves – had on an average barely one year's preparation for war. Besides, compared with our recruits, conscripts had less pay, poorer rations, and quarters; moreover, they were supplied with ill-fitting, second-hand uniforms, which were not calculated to inspire youths with military ardour.

The unpleasant truth to be faced is this: English recruits for both the Army and the Navy are over-indulged; nor does excessive indulgence tend to make soldiers and seamen hardy!

There was a vast expenditure of rifle ammunition during the fighting, and on one occasion a very much flustered Guards officer came to me demanding some small-arms ammunition carts in a hurry.

'The Guards want powder,' I exclaimed dramatically, 'and, by God, they shall have it!' The officer, with a chilling glance, eyed me up and down contemptuously, and, much humiliated, I had to explain that I was only quoting from Conan Doyle's famous play, *The Story of Waterloo*.

On the 30th of September, I resumed command of D Battery, 75th Brigade, R.F.A., which was covering the 4th Battalion of the Grenadier Guards.

On about the 2nd of October our plans were recast, the 11th Corps moving up into the line, and it was decided that the Guards were to storm the village of Hulluch. In furtherance of this plan, our batteries were assembled near Vermelles, and we were ordered to dig gun-pits at, or near, the Lone Tree, in the old German front line, about a thousand yards due east of Le Rutoire, and within two thousand yards or so of Hulluch, it being hoped that at this close range we might effectively cut the German wire.

While reconnoitring the ground in search of a favourable

battery position, during the forenoon of the 2nd of October, accompanied by my orderly and signaller, I noticed a body of about two hundred men marching across the gloomy plain, through dense fog, towards Vermelles. The officer leading them shouted to me in a familiar voice: 'Hulloa, Hervey! What are you doing here?'

'Who and what are you?' I cried.

'I am George Ponsonby; and we are the 4th Grenadier Guards who have just been relieved.'

'What, all of them?' I exclaimed.

'Yes,' he rejoined. 'All that are left of us.' And they passed on, ghost-like, through the mist.

The ground I was examining was still strewn with the débris of battle: rifles, greatcoats, boots, field-glasses, cooking utensils, spades, picks, and bandoliers were scattered all over the place in profusion. Here and there were some of the strangest articles: I saw a musical box, a few chessmen, some playing-cards, a school desk, a tennis-racket, Bibles and other books, photographs, a woman's bonnet, skirt, and under-clothing.

Slowly walking forward, I suddenly came upon a man seated on a pile of sandbags, his rounded back towards me; he appeared to be writing. I shouted: 'Hulloa, cockie!'

He never stirred nor answered, and when I reached him I found he was dead. On his knee was a writing-pad and an unfinished letter, which began: 'Darling Mother.'

The stench from the carcasses of horses and the corpses of men was appalling. I had to pass between Vermelles and the Lone Tree many times in the dark and dense fog, during the first week in October, and I always knew if I had wandered too far out of my way by the fearful stink of the shambles at Le Rutoire.

One afternoon early in October, while we were working at our gun emplacements, the enemy opened fire with very heavy ordnance on the road between Loos and Philosophe. I noticed a motor-car stop, a party of officers descend from

it and proceed along the road on foot. Just then a huge shell burst near the group, and there were evident signs of consternation: figures rushing to and fro and bodies being borne to the motor-car – General Freddy Wing had been killed.

For many days I was bombarding a section of the German line at Hulluch to try and cut the wire, observing from a sap-head in no man's land; the grass was long, I was well concealed, and it was a quiet spot, though very close to the enemy. The range was short, and I was bursting the shrapnel as near the wire standards as possible; but after some hours came to the conclusion that the only effective shells were those which struck the entanglements before they burst. A senior officer asked me, after I had fired several hundreds of rounds, how I was progressing. I answered: 'I do not know whether wire can break shrapnel-bullets; but I am quite sure that shrapnel-bullets cannot break wire.' The officer seemed annoyed at my answer. Nevertheless, in 1916, on Salisbury Plain, after experiments, I observed many shrapnel-bullets neatly cut in two lying amongst the barbed wire we had been bombarding. It was eventually demonstrated that it is not possible to destroy entanglements effectively with time-shrapnel. Wire can be cut with high-explosive shell fused with a sensitive detonator bursting on graze, fired from a howitzer with high-angle fire.

The fighting was furious in front of the Bois de Hugo, as the Germans, exasperated at the loss of Loos, counter-attacked again and again with desperation. I shall never forget the assault which they delivered on the 7th of October; they moved forward as if on parade, with arms linked, chanting Luther's hymn. I was observing the fire of our batteries from a forward position. The spectacle was awe-inspiring; the Germans were literally being mown down by our barrage, like corn-stalks under the blades of a reaping machine. I saw them, as a salvo of shrapnel struck them, wheel round their dead, reform and advance,

Eventually, most wisely in my opinion, the idea of storming Hulluch was abandoned. On the 13th of October, the Lincolnshire and Leicestershire Regiments lost very heavily in a gallant, but fruitless, attempt to take the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Altogether Loos was a bad battle for us, though on the 27th of September, I believe, the *Daily Mail* came out with headlines: 'Victory at Last.' This provoked the satire of the Germans.

On the whole, I was discouraged; judging by what I had seen, I feared we should never beat the Germans in the field. Our gas was ineffectual, our Artillery bombardment was almost useless, and our staff work was bad. The Guards should have been in support of the 15th Division, not in reserve. The wire in front of the 1st Division was not cut, and thus they were unable to advance. From a purely material and technical point of view, our army was at a low ebb in 1915. We had, indeed, nothing to boast about save the brave spirits and fine sense of duty of our citizen-soldiers: but even in our newly raised divisions, the disastrous effects of the dry nursing of Tommy Atkins by his company officers was apparent – he was inferior in initiative and self-reliance to the enemy, and was helpless when separated from his officers. In consolidating our new line, it became necessary to lay fresh wire, and men of a certain battalion would not fix the entanglements without their officers being continually present and exposing themselves to danger in senseless fashion.

After the 13th of October the fighting died down, and the lines remained stabilised where they had been advanced on the 26th of September, through the valour of our Highlanders. A salient, however, was created at Loos, which must have been the cause of many casualties to us for the remaining three years of the War. But our army had had such poor success in its offensives that we were loth to abandon the ground we had won at such terrific sacrifice.

I had one officer – Lieutenant Gahan – severely wounded

in the leg. Our heaviest casualties in the Field Artillery, however, occurred amongst our signallers, who used frequently to be called upon to repair telephone wires under fire: a nerve-racking task, but essential, as the greatest anxiety of battery officers was the maintenance of telephonic communication between the gun positions and the observation posts.

One day, after attending the burial of two of my brave signallers in the little plot of ground at Vermelles consecrated to the graves of the British, I was thanking the padre for his services, when he casually observed: 'I have to bury a Cavalry officer now; he is lying there, sewn up in his blanket, poor fellow !'

'I did not know there were any Cavalry up here,' I remarked.

'Yes,' he added. 'Some dismounted Cavalry were brought up to Vermelles on Sunday. This is Major Mason of the 3rd Dragoon Guards.'

He was my brother-in-law, whom I had not seen for years !

At Béthune, where our resting troops found billets, there was a café, known as the Globe, where, if one sat long enough, one might see every officer of the British Army. There I met one day my old friend Sir James Home, who, though nearly sixty years of age, was gallantly serving as a regimental officer in the mud and blood of the trenches. I introduced him to one of my subalterns, adding: 'You see, he wears the Waterloo medal !' Sir James had the ribbons of the Tel-el-kebir campaign of 1882.

Many of our field guns were burst at Loos when firing high-explosive shells. Indeed, until it was discovered how to weld and strengthen the bases of these projectiles, it was unsafe to fire them from eighteen-pounders. In the many controversies about the shortage of high-explosive shells this fact seems to have been overlooked.

The Guards were admirable in the fighting line; their

discipline marvellous, and their trenches a model of how trenches should be maintained. The older officers were civil and courteous, but some of the youngsters, never having been wheeled into line while on service at home, behaved rather snobbishly to some of our splendid young Irish youths while serving as forward observing officers in the trenches, and we had to make complaints; but the general supported us, and things ran smoothly after both parties had blown off some hot air.

By November we were back again at Laventie, where we came into action at Croix Rouge, and we had many casualties, as the enemy never ceased bombarding our gun-pits. One morning a shell cut a young officer completely in two. Although nothing remained of the poor fellow below the waist, for some seconds he continued to speak, saying: 'Good-bye ! Good-bye ! I am gone !' This shocking sight caused intense grief and horror to us all.

The Guards were overworked at about this time: they being in the same corps as the Welsh Division, and although, later on, when under the command of that fine soldier, Major-General Blackader, the Welshmen improved in discipline, in February 1916, they were not deemed sufficiently trained to hold the line for long, some of their units being under leaders whose sole qualification for command was the favour of a prominent politician. Our forward observing officer was appalled one day in the fire-trench to see N.C.O.s of this division who had completely lost their heads: one was standing on the floor of the trench and firing his rifle into the air.

The last I saw of the Guards was when they were marching down the La Bassée road to relieve the Welsh in the line. How splendid those tall, manly youths appeared, chanting: 'Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag and smile, smile, smile !' As they passed me, they were marching almost slowly, with a sort of strolling gait; their heads erect, a glow of confidence in their eyes. Many of them were going

straight to their death on that gloomy winter evening. I knew it, and I could hardly choke back my tears. They knew it, but they strode on cheerfully, the light of God shining in their faces !

That night the Guards carried out a raid, and we, the Artillery, put down a box-barrage to protect them : they had some casualties, and my old friend, George Ponsonby, with a shattered thigh, was recovered from no man's land by the skill and coolness of his comrades.

In February, I had resumed command of the ammunition-column, and we were parked at Merville, where for some time I suffered from shingles and laryngitis ; and, as I could not shake off my troubles, I was invalided home to the officers' hospital at Osborne in the Isle of Wight.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE OF ARRAS

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Matthew x. 34.

DURING my convalescence at Osborne, by the courtesy of the housekeeper I visited the late Queen Victoria's apartments, which had been left untouched since her death. They were furnished in extreme Victorian style and supplied evidence of her intense German sympathies: the affectionately worded footnotes on the photographs were usually written in the German language. The housekeeper told me that the old Queen could not abide any but German servant-maids about her household.

On being discharged from hospital, I went to Ipswich to lecture to the officers of the Field Artillery of the 58th (London) Division on lessons learnt from the war. I emphasised the importance of uninterrupted communication by telephone between observation posts and gun positions, of the sorting of ammunition before its distribution to batteries, and of the care of horses picketed in the open; but it soon became apparent that the only matter which interested those senior officers whose duty it was to inspect us was the management of the horse-lines. Touching on this, I pleaded for an abundant supply of nosebags kept in good repair; because, without sound nosebags, the horses at the front had literally to starve, the corn being scattered, trampled into the mud, and lost.

I was strongly of opinion, too, that horses should only be clipped on the throat and belly, so that they might be able

to withstand the terribly hard conditions to which they were exposed during the winter, and I always argued that it was a crime to clip their legs, as the longer the hair the better the poor creatures were protected against the mud, damp, and cold in Flanders and on the Somme; besides, there being no sweat-glands in the legs, clipping them is of no practical use. But I found myself opposed by some ex-Cavalry and Horse Artillery generals, who considered that unclipped horses did not look smart – that is to say, pretty! Moreover, the Veterinary Corps lived in a state of perpetual terror of mange: they took such exaggerated precautions to prevent mange that, in depriving the wretched beasts of their warm coats, they slew thousands of them with pneumonia. If, during a tour of inspection, a veterinary surgeon happened to notice a remount twitching his hide – a trick which horses have – every living animal in the district was clipped closely from his nose to his tail and dipped into some evil-smelling bath, even when the thermometer was down at zero.

In March 1916 I was posted to command B Battery, 290th Brigade, R.F.A., in the 58th Division at Ipswich.

At Easter the appalling news of the Irish Rebellion reached us and my feelings of antipathy for the Irish increased a thousandfold: to me, fresh from witnessing the valour and sufferings of our troops in the mud and blood of the trenches at Loos, the Easter rising was the basest, most treacherous stab in the back. As usual, the Government handled the situation weakly and in a fickle spirit; so that whereas, in the beginning, the vast majority of Irishmen denounced the rebellion, in a few months' time, disgusted at the tergiversation of English Ministers, they came to regard even such a creature as McBride as a martyr and hero!

I learned with indignation and grief of the murder of Frank Browning, the cheery president of the Irish Rugby Football Union, by a gang of cowardly Sinn Feiners.

While we were being thus treacherously stabbed in the back by the Irish rebels, the French were maintaining their

valiant defence of Verdun – one of the most heroic episodes in history. Their watchword: '*Ils ne passeront pas !*' aroused the enthusiasm of all the Allies; and the despairing cry: '*Debout les morts !*' of the dying captain, as the Germans retired discomfited before the few determined survivors of his company, will echo down the ages as an epic, like the horn of Roland at Roncevaux.

But the Russians, with their unstable disposition, were showing signs of growing war-weary, and everything pointed to many more years of fighting for us.

Several air-raids took place in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, the Germans being keen to damage the destroyer-base at Harwich; but no great harm was done. One night a Zeppelin hovered over our camp on Warren Heath for two hours, and the troops, aroused from their sleep, were made to stand to arms and preserve absolute silence; no one, of course, being allowed to smoke. Everyone in consequence was irritable, nervous, and exasperated. It defies the wit of man to explain what good this stupid parade of all ranks in the middle of the night could have effected. I believe I earned the gratitude of the men by persuading the commanding officer of the futility of disturbing them during an air-raid.

In July the 58th Divisional Artillery moved from Ipswich to Salisbury Plain, the officers being billeted in Heytesbury, a charming, picturesque village. For several months on the experimental ranges we practised firing rolling barrages in support of Infantry; thus the gunnery of the batteries became excellent.

It was not until January 1917, however, that this division was sent to France, and we marched from Arras, where we detrained, to Pommier. The weather was intensely cold, the whole country being frost-bound; indeed, on the march we found it extremely difficult to water our teams, as all the ponds and wells were frozen. The men, however, were

very keen, accustoming themselves to the cold by vigorous exercises and constant activities, and their health remained splendid.

The new box-respirator had just been issued ; it was a vast improvement on the flannel bags soaked in chemicals which were in use at the Battle of Loos. I insisted on every detachment practising gas-mask drill for twenty minutes every day. My battery-sergeant-major, who combined great skill as an instructor with a ready wit, used to address the men thus :

‘This box-respirator has got to be put on quickly : remember, in a gas-attack there are only the quick and the dead !’

Gas projected in clouds from the front-line trench had been abandoned by both sides, as with a veering wind it often came back like a boomerang, so that in 1917 and 1918 gas was always projected in shells well over the heads of the Infantry into the gun-positions, and the Artillery had to bear the brunt of all the attacks by lachrymose, blistering, and lethal shells : and there was one devilish invention, the blue cross shell, which on bursting started us all sneezing, so that we could not adjust our respirators.

A gas shell can be recognised by the peculiar sound of its flight, it being filled with liquid, which is swirled round by the spin of the projectile containing it. It lands with a dull ‘plunk’ and does not burst, but splits open, its contents being squirted over the ground, and the gas, being evolved from this moisture, spread about between the gun positions. Troops which have not been trained to keep their respirators in good order, to be self-reliant and prompt in adjusting their masks, are bound to suffer heavy casualties from gas, as, when the attack has begun, it is too late for any supervision by officers. Sufficient oxygen was filtered through the box-respirator to enable the wearer to keep alive when sitting still, but insufficient to enable him to carry out his duties, when those duties demanded an increase of activity.

Our first position in the line was at Monchy au Bois, and

during February and March we were continually being pounded by bombs from aeroplanes and by heavy projectiles from long-range howitzers. On the 17th of March the enemy evacuated his front trenches and retired some sixteen miles, to what we called the Hindenburg line: the Germans, I believe, named it the Siegfried line. So skilfully was this movement effected that our Infantry remained ignorant of the German retreat for many days. A few individuals left behind, busily employed with Vérey lights and rattles which, being vigorously agitated, sounded exactly like machine-guns in action, gave the impression for a time that the enemy was still present, ever watchful, behind his wire entanglements.

When we moved forward, we found that, with devilish cunning, the Germans had contrived the most ingenious obstacles to our advance: cross-roads had been mined, craters created by explosions, walls and buildings overthrown at the most inconvenient spots; everywhere, too, we found booby-traps of the deadliest character. The enemy had laid waste the country, turning it into a desert: the abomination of desolation.

All our guns and vehicles were provided with portable bridges to enable them, in the advance, to pass over the shell-craters and trenches which were frequently encountered. In crossing no man's land, as we pursued the Germans, we found skeletons of French soldiers and marines which had been lying there since the first weeks of the war, marking how stabilised that sector of the front had been for more than two years. The skulls of the poor fellows were bleached as white as ivory, and rags of red cloth were all that remained of the bright-coloured trousers of which the old French Infantry were as proud as Tommy Atkins used to be of his scarlet coat. Here and there, in the grass, close by these melancholy remnants of humanity, coins could even be found which had fallen out of decayed pockets. One of my drivers, catching sight of something glittering amongst

the weeds, slipped down from his saddle and secured a prize : one of the golden five-franc pieces which, even in peacetime, used to be so very rare.

Although the Germans had retired only seventeen miles, our pursuit was painfully slow ; moreover, it was not deemed wise to engage the enemy in his fresh positions until we had a thousand rounds for each gun dumped in the vicinity of our new line. Now, whereas in England our horses had been doing gentle exercise on ten pounds of oats a day, here, in the mud of Artois, the poor beasts were called upon to haul guns and heavy loads of ammunition for nearly twenty miles and return to their lines on a miserable ration of eight pounds of corn ; the result was pitiable ; the horses suffered terribly, dying like flies.

I found that, after their hard day's work, horses did better on oats soaked in hot water and served to them as a mash. It was a mournful satisfaction to me to observe that one of my sections, whose teams still retained their thick winter coats, owing to a fortunate shortage of clipping machines just before we left England, stood the fearful ordeal much better than those which I had been ordered to have clipped.

I have never been able to suffer fools gladly, so, one day, I let my temper get the better of me in discussing with a senior officer of the Veterinary Corps, who was watching our poor, patient horses struggling through the mire, up to their hocks, the conditions under which my teams were compelled to work hauling their painful loads to the front ; to my surprise, he did not resent my outburst.

Staff officers in the Great War were far more considerate of the troubles which had to be faced by regimental officers than they were in the Boer War, during which their arrogance and incompetence were insufferable. Sometimes, nevertheless, I felt that I disliked an English staff officer more than I hated the Germans.

I observed a very marked change in the feelings which

prevailed amongst the troops at the front in 1917 from those which obtained in 1915. In the early days of the War our men were like crusaders: chivalrous, confident in the justice of our cause, and ready and willing for self-sacrifice. But in 1917 the years of weary disappointment, of horror and detestation of the savagery and cruelty of war, had undoubtedly blunted the enthusiasm of our soldiers: everyone was longing for the end. Moreover, in the front line especially, a certain strange sympathy with the German lads suffering similar hardships and unspeakable discomfort on the other side of no man's land was growing: Tommy and Fritz had begun to realise that they were sharing the same misery, and perhaps a common destiny.

The French, too, in certain villages in the vicinity of Doullens, began to manifest dislike of the English who were always trespassing on their land, intruding themselves in their homes, who seemed so flippanant and careless in the face of the appalling disaster which had befallen France. They compared the sumptuous rations enjoyed by Tommy Atkins with the meagre fare of the *poilu*; the greater efforts and heavier casualties of their own army with the lighter duties performed by the English in holding a shorter portion of the line from the Channel to Switzerland. Strange to say, too, an idea prevailed amongst the French peasants that the English would remain on in France, and that it might require another war, another du Guesclin, another Joan of Arc, to turn them out!

The weather remained very cold during the early spring, and when the Battle of Arras opened there was snow on the ground, and we were lying out in the open night after night. Fortunately for me, I had a sheepskin sleeping-bag: I maintain that this saved my life; because my old enemy, laryngitis, had attacked me at Codford Camp in December 1916; at that time, however, I had managed to stave it off and keep the medical authorities ignorant until we were in action at Monchy; but the severe weather was too much for me,

and I lost my voice completely and was ordered into a field-hospital near the line at Pommier.

General E. J. R. Peel was very patient and considerate, and gave me every opportunity of recuperating.

My battery was the first in the division to come into action against the fresh German position at Henin-sur-Cojeul, but this was not much to boast about, as we had taken five days to transport six guns and six thousand rounds of ammunition across the zone which the enemy had devastated by cutting down every tree, flattening out every village, and, with devilish ingenuity, destroying or rendering impassable every road.

I saw the Irish Horse, one day, caught by the fire of a machine gun. In their advance in extended lines they came upon a belt of wire, and, unwisely converging towards an opening or passage which had been cut through the entanglements, suffered very heavy casualties when bunched together. The fire was disastrous to both horses and men. This incident went far towards convincing me of the limitations of Cavalry in modern warfare.

At Boiry Ste. Rictrude, where we had established our wagon lines, a very exciting incident occurred, nor can I help thinking how singularly appropriate it was that I, who had spent two years of my life seeking for treasure, should have been a witness of it. I was inspecting the horses at 9 a.m. one morning when a French civilian approached me and presented a permit authorising him to make a search on the very ground on which our teams were picketed, that happening to be the site on which his own home had stood in August 1914. The village of Boiry Ste. Rictrude was completely devastated, there being not one stone left standing upon another; not a sign of the unfortunate man's villa or garden was visible; nothing but the dust of some bricks trampled into the soil indicated that there, a human habitation had once stood. The Frenchman, borrowing a pick and spade from the quartermaster-sergeant, set to work to

dig. After watching him for a few minutes, I resumed my duties. He stuck to his work manfully for several hours, sometimes stopping to measure with a tape; he would then resume his task in another spot.

At noon my batman carried him out a can of coffee, some biscuits, and a chunk of bully beef; and for this he was most grateful. At about 2 p.m. I decided to mount my charger and ride forward to the gun-positions. Fascinated by the man, I, nevertheless, lingered on to watch him for another quarter of an hour. Just as I was about to depart, my patience exhausted, an exclamation of delight escaped his lips. 'I have it !' he cried. Turning my charger round once more, I rode up to the man in time to see him unearth a fairly large cash-box. With a blow of the pick he smashed open the box : inside were gold coins filling it to the brim !

'Come,' I said to the drivers, who had gathered around in expectation of some excitement, 'give him a cheer !'

'Me cheer ?' yelled the farrier-sergeant, with well-simulated exasperation. 'Not me ! Why, I've been sitting on that very spot for three days !'

The Battle of Arras, in its opening stages, was a great success for us, and our barrage covering the Infantry was so effective that they carried Henin-sur-Cojeul on the very first day with few casualties.

During the first week of April I was invalided to the base at Harfleur, remaining there for a month. I succeeded, too, in getting sent to England with a draft, and during my five or six days of leave in London I put myself in the hands of a throat-specialist, who did me so much good that, on my return to Harfleur, I was able to persuade a medical board to pass me fit for the front; thus, by the 1st of June, I was back again with the 58th Division, which was facing the enemy amidst the bloody ruins of Bullecourt.

And still the din of battle was screaming its pæan of praise

to the grim spectre of the Apocalypse riding his red horse and wielding his great sword !

Some of the most desperate and sanguinary encounters of the War were fought between the villages of Ecooust and Bullecourt. The gaps in the walls and parapets of our trenches were built up with our dead, and there was one horrid place where we had to walk on the backs of five corpses trampled into the mud on our way to the front. Up to the second week in June there were no communication trenches, and, to reach our forward observation posts, we had to cross open country, always under fire. Despite the free and extravagant use of lime, there was a prevailing stench of decaying flesh, and the flies – beautiful, emerald green insects – increasing and multiplying in the noisome surroundings, tormented us in the hot summer days and made me feel sick with horror : I could never swallow food in the trenches, but used to wait for a meal until I could go back to our gun positions or wagon-line.

Sometimes the Germans drove us back to Ecooust, sometimes we won back Bullecourt, but finally our front line settled down in the town itself, traversing a pile of white dust which marked where the church had once stood.

The enemy shelled us incessantly, and we had many casualties. One day the field-howitzers on my right were bombarded for two hours with eight-inch shells. They were less than two hundred yards from my dug-out, and I watched the effect of the explosions with interest. One enormous projectile pitched exactly beneath the axle-tree of a 4.5-inch howitzer and, when the smoke and the dust had dispersed, everything had completely disappeared. Later in the evening, when the shelling had ceased, I walked over the ground to examine the amazing results of the explosions. Nothing remained of the mounting of the howitzer, but the barrel itself, stripped of its fittings, had been hurled a distance of 110 yards.

The bombardments in the forward trenches had disgusting

effects, limbs and portions of corpses being frequently blown out of the earth and scattered about the place. On a certain occasion I was standing in the fire-trench alongside Dr. Haden Guest. The Germans were 'strafing' us, and, in the midst of the dust and smoke of an explosion, we saw a thing like a football bounding towards us, finally to settle on the parapet under our noses. It was a human head !

Dr. Haden Guest always seemed to be on duty in the most advanced aid-posts and dressing-stations ; his calm courage once helped to stiffen my faltering nerves during a soul-shaking bombardment to which we were both exposed in Bullecourt. He became a Socialist M.P. after the War.

The infantry brigade which we were covering was commanded by Brigadier-General Freyberg, V.C. This remarkable man was wearing, at that time, two ribbons on his breast, and two only : those of the V.C. and the D.S.O. One night I repaired to the headquarters of the battalion which was detailed to storm the Green Redoubt under our creeping barrage at 4 a.m. on the following morning. There I met Freyberg, and he invited me to go for a walk with him in the front line. It was nearly midnight and pitch dark. During our conversation, he was surprised to learn that I was old enough to be his father, I being forty-nine and he only twenty-nine years of age. On arriving at the fire-trench, he proceeded to climb out of it and walk along our front, outside our wire. He had a huge revolver in his belt, and when we reached a certain heap of timber, piled criss-cross fashion in no man's land, asking me what it was, he pulled his pistol out of the holster and thrust it forward menacingly. I told him that the pile was all that remained of a wood-yard : I knew the place well, as I had hidden myself there one morning to observe fire on the Green Redoubt.

'Don't go outside it,' I warned him, 'or you may walk into the German line !'

'Who is that moving about in that timber?' he enquired. 'Shall I shoot him?' And thereupon he cocked his revolver.

'No,' I whispered; 'he must be one of our own men.'

And so it proved to be.

Freyberg told me that he really enjoyed being under fire; that it stimulated and exhilarated him. He apologised for his famous exploits, saying that they were really of no great credit to him, as he was convinced that he felt neither fear nor pain as other men. He was, moreover, most charitable in his judgments on others whose nerves were less well tempered than his own, and was always thinking of the wounded lying out in no man's land, carrying water to them under fire with absolute unconcern for his own safety. He really earned half a dozen Victoria Crosses during the War.

On my return to battalion headquarters, I grumbled at having had to stroll about in no man's land with the brigadier-general.

'You're luckier than an Artillery subaltern last night,' interjected the colonel, 'for he was led across to the German wire by Freyberg, who, tapping it with his cane, exclaimed with irritation: "You see, you damned gunners haven't cut this wire at all!"'

The psychology of the soldier is strangely paradoxical: the three greatest cowards in battle whom I ever met were men who, gauged by their peace-time pastimes, might have been expected to be heroes: one was an international polo-player and the other two had been public school and county cricketers. On the other hand, some of the bravest I have ever known were youths who had never possessed the leisure or means to be sportsmen: clerks, dentists, shop assistants, or village schoolmasters.

I once asked Marshal Pétain, while he was standing amidst a group of his staff officers outside the *popote* at Chantilly, who, in his opinion, was the finest soldier which the war had produced. General Buat, his chief of the staff, answered me, amidst a chorus of approval: 'Undoubtedly the German

machine-gunner !' The German machine-gunner's devotion to duty, resourcefulness, initiative, and self-reliance were unequalled by those of the soldiers of any other Power. A shameful libel was spread that the German machine-gunners had to be chained to their guns – implying, of course, that they might have run away had they not been so bound. The so-called chains were really the man-harness used for hauling the guns by hand about the fields.

We made several attempts to storm the Green Redoubt, but never succeeded in carrying it. Our Infantry, dispirited at last, could not be persuaded to go over the top when the whistles blew at zero hour. Nor is it possible to blame them, for so deadly were the German machine-guns that it meant almost certain death to face their fire.

So constant and heavy were the bombardments of Ecooust that, towards the end of June, it was decided to withdraw all field-guns from that village and, as there were large dumps of shells and cartridges, I was ordered, together with other batteries, to carry away several thousands of rounds during the night. This proved to be a nerve-racking task for our drivers, and it lasted all through the short, dark midsummer hours. Under cover of darkness, wagons and limbers were brought up from the rear and one by one, as required, were moved forward into the village itself, each being then reversed so that the drivers seated in their saddles had their backs to the enemy while under fire: always a terrible trial to the nerves ! As each vehicle was driven into position hard by some ammunition dump, a whistle was sounded, where-upon fatigue-parties of gunners sheltering in dug-outs would spring into the open and commence packing the shell-cartridges into the limber-boxes as fast as possible; as soon as both wagon body and limber were fully loaded, the order to drive on was shouted, and then the drivers, putting their horses into their breast-harness, would spur them from a trot to a gallop out of the danger-zone. We were continually

under fire throughout the night, and it was a horrible ordeal. I myself used to stand in front of the lead-horses of each team, in turn, to steady them, releasing the reins and leaping aside when I heard the last steel box-cover slammed and the yell, 'Drive on !' Several times while waiting, sitting still, for their load to be completed, the drivers, mere lads, would lean over their horses' necks and sob like children out of sheer fright !

Again and again shells would burst with terrific crashes around us, the flashes of the explosions momentarily lighting up the scene, and the shell-fragments whistling about our ears. Now and then a horse or a man would be hit, though, strange to say, none was severely wounded that night and only two were killed. Once a team of some other battery working on my right stampeded.

I myself felt my heart frozen with fear: the horrible din was deafening, the huge shells seeming to descend upon us with the roar and rush of an express train.

Some fellow once screamed: 'Oh, my God ! This one has got us !'

A sergeant used to keep repeating: 'That's a five-nine; this is an eight-inch !' as the shells burst.

'What's this one, sergeant?' queried a deep, Scottish voice, when a still more terrifying screech announced the arrival of a projectile of even huger dimensions.

'Now they're throwing the bloody gun at us !' the sergeant replied.

When at last the job was finished and I was back in comparative safety in my dug-out, I experienced a strange feeling of exhilaration at having come safely out of the ordeal: I could have danced, sung, or shouted with joy !

The battery position which I occupied was where the Australians, in the month of May, had lost some guns which were immediately afterwards recaptured by their Infantry in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter. It was in the first offensive at Bullecourt, where the Australians, instead of

advancing straight to their front, had inclined to the left, following the line of least resistance, and so had blanketed the English division moving on Bullecourt; while Noreuil, the true objective of the Australians, was left unmenaced after the opening barrage. The result was disastrous, as the enemy on our right was able to outflank and enfilade our troops as they advanced, pressing forward right up to the Australian gun positions. The desperate valour and fighting qualities of the colonials could not make up for their faulty direction, and they had to return on their tracks to regain at heavy cost the ground seized by the Germans.

Our wagon-lines were at Achiet-le-Petit, from which Amiens was an easy motor-ride. Obtaining permission one day to spend a few hours in that gay and attractive city, I ordered my charger to be sent to meet me at the cross-roads, known as the Mort Homme, half a mile or so behind our gun positions, at six o'clock in the morning. We had had some fighting during the night in the midst of a thunder-storm, and two of our dead were lying under their ground-sheets, behind the telephone dug-out, when I departed for my half-holiday. I reached the wagon-line at 7 a.m., and, after a wash and brush-up, joined a staff officer who had promised me a lift in his car.

Amiens, although so close, displayed an amazing contrast to the battle-zone: there, within sound, almost within sight, of the stark horrors of the firing-line, the primrose path of dalliance was being trodden by officers from every Allied Army, more especially Australians; they were swarming in the restaurants, where the most expensive delicacies could be enjoyed by *gourmets* and *gourmands* alike. One of the waitresses, an exquisite little beauty, was much admired and persistently courted. She always used to defend herself by saying: 'Do not waste your time, sir. As for me, I shall always remain faithful to my prince!'

Crowds of smartly dressed women were promenading in the Rue des Trois Cailloux, displaying *toilettes* worthy of the

Rue de la Paix. Jazz bands, with female musicians, were playing in the *cafés* and *thés dansants*. In the town I ran across that generous soul and noble-hearted gentleman, the late Colonel Atherton, who was overcome with grief at the news which had just reached him of the death of his old comrade, General Broadwood, who had been killed by a shell two days earlier.

By 11 p.m. – or twenty-three o'clock, as it was known at the front – I was back again amidst the stern realities of war: the two poor dead bodies were still laid out under their ground-sheets behind the telephone dug-out, awaiting burial.

Early in July we were ordered to march to the Somme, which at that time was regarded as a quiet sector of the front. The sky was overcast and the atmosphere heavy as we moved off from our lines at Achiet-le-Petit, and a German aeroplane dived down from behind the low-hanging clouds and, flying along our column, opened fire on us with a machine-gun. It was a bold coup on the part of the airman, but, when every anti-aircraft gun, every rifle, and every pistol in the neighbourhood returned his fire, he lost his nerve and became so scared that his aim grew wild and we suffered only insignificant casualties. The German wheeled, swooped, and darted about, for all the world like an angry dragon-fly, sometimes skimming quite close to the ground; and finally he was able to effect his escape, screened by the heavy rain-clouds lowering like a mist over the fields.

Our march through the theatre of the terrible Battle of the Somme was interesting, there being evidence on all sides of how desperate and bloody had been the fighting in 1916. Some villages, such as Clery, had been pounded out of existence, and their pulverised ruins were so overgrown with weeds that, walking over the site of some hamlet, one was amazed to learn that a human dwelling had once stood there. The exquisite peonies, which had been cultivated in the village gardens, had seeded themselves and were growing in profusion, displaying a riot of colours, and the whole

countryside was dotted with patches of yellow charlock marking the spots where our dead in the great battle were buried; some caprice of nature by fortuitous fertilisation having particularly favoured this saffron-coloured weed at the season when the earth was disturbed to take to her bosom a warrior resting in God. Butterflies, too, danced their noiseless fairy-reels above our noble dead – rare, beautiful creatures; I once counted four swallow-tails hovering above the charlock which defined a square of sacred ground.

We came into action at Gouzeaucourt, with ammunition parks at Metz-en-Couture. At Gouzeaucourt there was a salient bulging into the German line, so it was exposed to fire on its two flanks and front: it is the zone which became triply famous as the scene of Byng's surprise of the Germans with 'tanks' in November 1917; the enemy's successful counter-attack, a few days later; and the rout of the right of our 3rd Army in March 1918. Our period of duty at Gouzeaucourt lasted about six weeks; it was a sector of the front which at that time was regarded as quiet; indeed, we were supposed to be at rest; nevertheless, we suffered some very severe bombardments. On one occasion, when I was on my way to the front line, the enemy put down a heavy barrage, with disastrous results to us; our forward observing post was completely destroyed, with all the telephone gear, and a dug-out in the fire-trench was blown in, many of our poor fellows being buried in it. I have seldom seen our Infantry in such disorder; the communication trench was so blocked with wild-eyed fugitives that, to avoid being trampled upon, I had to climb out into the open, where I lay for half an hour. On proceeding on my way, I found the support trench quite deserted; moreover, someone in his desperate haste had abandoned a freshly opened bottle of beer – a welcome find, as the day was sultry! While returning to our batteries in Gouzeaucourt Wood, a 5.9-inch shell descended right upon me with the roar of an avalanche, burying itself – fortunately without exploding – in the wall

of the communication trench within a few inches of my head. I felt the wind of this projectile, and either from fright or concussion I was hurled backwards to the ground. A quarter of a mile further to our rear, on issuing from the communication trench, scared and half stunned, I noticed a number of Tommies kicking a football about a field, as unconcerned as if they were on Woolwich Common !

After six weeks of duty in this sector of the line, I gathered the impression that it was not well organised for defence; besides, the Artillery maps on this front were most inaccurate: in those issued to me, I found an error of three hundred yards between Gouzeaucourt and Ribécourt. A careful study of the position revealed also the disquieting fact that, between the batteries and our front line, all was dead ground: none of our guns could be brought to bear on an enemy, who might have broken through, until he had arrived right on the top of them. Villiers-Plouich and La Vacquerie lie in a hollow between Gouzeaucourt Wood and Ribécourt, so that, as the Germans advanced in their famous offensive in the spring of 1918, after having captured our front line, all our shells passed harmlessly over their heads. New and advanced gun-emplacements from which our Artillery might sweep the whole terrain were essential, and I was siting positions on the high ground commanding all possible approaches from Ribécourt, and had actually set men to work to dig gun-pits, when our division was ordered to move to Ypres.

The Havrincourt and Gouzeaucourt Woods constituted a salient in front of Cambrai, the steeples and roofs of which might be seen from our observation posts: and this salient was a vulnerable spot in General Byng's line. Although not within the zone of the 5th Army, nor within the radius of General Gough's responsibilities, it was he, nevertheless, who was made the scapegoat when the enemy broke through here on the 21st of March, 1918, defeating the right wing of the 3rd British Army. Our 5th Army suffered defeat,

because the politicians in the War Cabinet – grossly ignorant of the main principles of war – had refused the reinforcements demanded by our Commander-in-Chief. General Gough's only reserve on his extreme right flank was a French division hastily assembled, ill equipped, and ill supplied with rifle-cartridges; and, as I have shown, the position on his left flank at Gouzeaucourt was not properly organised for defence by Artillery, so that the officer commanding the 5th Army was not solely responsible for its defeat, as is implied by his disgrace; he was undoubtedly harshly, perhaps unjustly, treated by those politicians who, for four years, had nursed their spite against him for his participation in the 'Curragh Mutiny' !

CHAPTER XVII
PASSCHENDAELE

Truly to speak, sir, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.

Which is not tomb enough, and continent,
To hide the slain.

Hamlet, Act IV, scene iv.

AS far as it is possible for a humble field-officer, pre-occupied with his regimental duties at the front during the fierce fighting in the autumn of 1917, to understand the Battle of the Passchendaele Ridge, I apprehend that that bloody and fruitless struggle was undertaken with a view to turning the right flank of the enemy and compelling him to abandon the Belgian coast with his submarine bases. Had our army succeeded in carrying the Houthulst Wood, a joint naval and military attack in flat-bottomed boats might have been launched on Ostend and Zeebrugge. Sir Douglas Haig's plans, however, were thwarted by the weather and by the stubborn defence of the Germans, who were, themselves, appalled by the hideous spectacle of death and agony suffered by our troops in the swamps and bogs formed in the Ypres Salient when the Steenbeck and other streams burst their banks.

The British commander-in-chief has been severely criticised for persisting in the attacks on the Passchendaele Ridge throughout August and September, when it had become obvious that the enemy's position was impregnable, the unfavourable conditions, the rain and the mud, creating an insuperable barrier to our advance. It has been argued by friends of Sir Douglas Haig that it behoved him to attack in order to draw pressure off our allies, the French, whose

moral was at a low ebb owing to the appalling casualties which they had suffered since the outbreak of war: two millions of their young men had been lost through death, severe wounds, or capture. It was, moreover, pretended by apologists for Haig's strategy that Nivelle's offensive had been a French defeat. In this attack on the 16th of April, 1917, on a fifty-mile front on the Chemin des Dames, the French captured 55,000 prisoners, 1,000 mitrailleuses, and 800 cannon, after losing 117,000 men killed and wounded: does this read like a defeat? Indeed, by his capture of the Chemin des Dames, Nivelle secured the railway communication between Soissons and Reims, which was of tremendous strategic importance for France. What a pæan of victory would have gone up from Haig's headquarters if a success involving half these figures had graced British arms during the four months' fighting for the Passchendaele Ridge, in which we suffered three times as many casualties and lost three-quarters of our *moral*! If this attack of Nivelle's on the Chemin des Dames had really been a defeat, why did the Germans neglect to take advantage of their success? Why did they not counter-attack the French in May, June, or July, while the French were demoralised by mutiny, and before the British offensive in Flanders had opened? The truth is that, despite international jealousies and delays, which had postponed the operations from February and revealed their secret to the enemy, the attack on the Chemin des Dames was a success, but at a terrible cost of life, and Pétain, on assuming command of the French Army, had given a pledge that there should be no more foolhardy frontal assaults, on a large scale, on the German trenches – such as the Somme offensive – and the French politicians were determined to see that Pétain kept his word. Général Buat, chief of the staff at G.Q.G., assured me that both Pétain and Foch were strongly opposed to our persisting in the hopeless attack in Flanders after the ground had become waterlogged.

Moreover, the British Navy's urgent plea that our troops should endeavour to force the enemy to evacuate Zeebrugge and his submarine bases on the Belgian coast became impossible of execution when the torrential rain – a veritable cloudburst – at the end of July had changed all Flanders into a sea of mud. However that may be, the Battle of the Passchendaele Ridge was continued throughout August, September, and October, in the most depressing and heart-rending conditions, when it had become obvious to all ranks in the fighting line that the battle was futile, senseless, and hopeless of success! Our casualties mounted higher and higher into hundreds of thousands, and we watched the *moral* of our men ebbing fast away, and began to lose all faith in the skill of our commander-in-chief in the science and the art of war. Wherever I went in my reconnaissances, in 'Sanctuary Wood,' or along the front of the cemetery between 'Boche Castle' and the 'Bund,' the Infantry in the outlying pickets grumbled that they had never seen a staff officer or any senior officer within a mile of the front line; and so I was forced to the conclusion – from these complaints, and from the nature of orders, impossible of execution, which I received – that G.H.Q. were wholly ignorant of prevailing conditions: that they were being guided solely by maps drawn in peace-time before the ground, saturated with the heavy rains, had been battered and churned by hundreds of thousands of high-explosive shells into a sea of liquid mud in which men, horses, and mules must have drowned had they attempted to advance.

So great was the patience and discipline of our regimental officers, N.C.O.s, and men that it was not until after the battle that the depth of their resentment at being sacrificed in this futile slaughter was disclosed to me. Nothing provoked our ridicule more than the presence of Cavalry¹ massed behind our lines, revealing G.H.Q.'s childish belief

¹ Throughout the War, Sir D. Haig seemed incapable of realising that Cavalry cannot operate against barbed wire and machine-guns!

that Cavalry might be able to pursue the enemy, in the event of a break-through, across the sea of liquid mud where performing seals or porpoises might have been able to make better progress than horses !

Never, except in the tropics, have I seen such rain. We, ourselves, were in action in Gouzeaucourt Wood on the Somme on the night when the Ypres offensive opened. All our dug-outs were flooded flush with the surface of the ground ; my kit was floating about in deep water, and I shuddered as I watched the rats scampering away through the undergrowth seeking safety in the open fields.

Early in August the 58th Division was moved north in order to take part in the battle, our Artillery being parked for a few days amongst the hop-poles of Wormhoudt pending the decision as to where we were to be thrown into the line.

Our guns were first of all ordered into action at Zillebeke, at a point known as Yeomanry Post, to cover attacks on the Menin Road, at FitzClarence Farm and Gheluvelt, where in October 1914 the enemy had broken our line ; so accompanied by a trusted signaller, Corporal Osman, I had to reconnoitre the whole of this sector of the front. Such was the nature of the flat, featureless terrain that observation of fire was almost impossible, and I realised to my consternation that all our bombardments would have to be carried out by calculation and the map – by guess and by God !

On starting out from the gun positions to seek possible observation posts, we were greeted by an Artillery salvo, a shell of which killed the Australian battery commander whose duties I was actually taking over. Much distressed at this sad event, we, nevertheless, pursued our way along a path through 'Sanctuary Wood,' which presented the mournful appearance of being a mere ghost of a plantation, consisting of nothing but the charred stumps of trees and pools of foul, stagnant water. As we picked our way along a narrow causeway across this mephitic swamp we were shelled

incessantly, the enemy's guns being concentrated upon the duckboards, and this rendered our experiences acutely nerve-racking. At every step the stark horrors of the conditions reigning in the Ypres Salient were revealed to us, our dead lying literally in layers in 'Sanctuary Wood.' I saw the pale face of a dead soldier, who had fallen only the day before, pillowed upon the skeleton of one slain in 1914; both poor relics of humanity destined to be tossed about and broken by chance shells, unburied for many a month to come. Around 'Sterling Castle,' the name given to a reinforced concrete bomb-proof shelter constructed by the Germans, and evacuated by them in their retreat, the stench of decaying corpses was nauseating, and the sights too horrible to be described; they brought home to me, and left deeply engraved in my mind, the agony and terror so often suffered by the wounded and dying upon a battlefield. Limbs grotesquely contorted and features distorted with pain and fixed in death were common spectacles which wrung tears from the tender heart of my orderly.

Along the famous Menin Road, battered out of recognition and only distinguishable as a bank raised above the level of the surrounding fields, were several derelict tanks, which, bogged in the terrible mud of Flanders, had been unable to advance in the recent fighting. As we climbed on to the higher ground which marked the line where the Menin Road had been, the enemy opened fire on us with a machine-gun, a bullet cutting off one of Corporal Osman's spurs. This startling reception was so unexpected that instinctively we flung ourselves on the ground, and, rolling down the slope of the bank, lay on our faces behind one of the waterlogged tanks, and awaited a more favourable opportunity to resume our quest. By wading through the mire under cover of the road, we tumbled at last upon the telephone dug-out - a hollow in the bank of the road. There was good cover for the operators, but to obtain a glimpse of only the tops of trees growing near FitzClarence Farm, one of our principal

targets, the observing officer had to perch himself on a heap of German corpses.

The Infantry's outlying picket was at 'Clapham Junction,' another concrete shelter constructed by the Germans. The officer in charge there expressed his amazement at seeing me, as he had not believed it possible for anyone to pass alive through 'Sanctuary Wood' during the hours of daylight. I was new to the Ypres Salient; besides, I had not been warned of the danger before starting on my reconnaissance, and I had regarded the inspection of forward observation posts as part of the essential duties of taking over a battery position in the line. Thus in my ignorance I had ventured with a light heart into this Valley of the Shadow of Death. It was somewhat exasperating to learn, on my return to Wormhoudt, that our orders were changed and we were to go into action to the north of Ypres, in the ruins of the village of Saint-Julien, so that the fearful risks Corporal Osman and I had run in 'Sanctuary Wood' had been incurred for no useful purpose whatever.

On the following morning some of our vehicles had to be pulled out of action at Yeomanry Post, and this was accomplished under very heavy fire, our drivers behaving with great gallantry. I was leading these vehicles past 'Shrapnel Corner' when I encountered a group of senior officers: General Sir Claud Jacob, General Kirby, Colonel Saltern-Willett, and others. Kirby and Saltern-Willett had been at the 'Shop' with me as cadets thirty years previously, and they introduced me to General Jacob, who, after putting a few questions to me and telling me that I was the oldest battery commander on the front, asked me if he could do anything for me. I immediately requested a Distinguished Conduct Medal for one of my drivers, and this request was very promptly granted.

I do not consider that the ranks of the Royal Field Artillery received their fair share of decorations in the War; they suffered almost as great hardships as the Infantry, and

had to undergo a far greater nervous strain, as they were very seldom allowed periods of rest behind the lines; besides, the incessant noise of gun-fire is most trying. I must add, too, that the Infantry and Gunners felt very sore about the rewards lavished upon the officers and men of the Flying Corps, who always enjoyed the most comfortable billets, and whose duties were easy compared with ours; moreover, they were only occasionally in danger – during their flights – whereas our lives were always in peril. While I was engaged in conversation with General Jacob, the enemy bombed and shelled the area in which we were, and Colonel Saltern-Willett was killed.

On the following day I was ordered to take over an abandoned battery-position on Admiral's Road, at a point where a light railway crossed it, and whose range and situation on the map, therefore, were known to the enemy to an inch. Indeed, there was abundant evidence that the gun-pits had been evacuated in a panic, as the ground was littered with equipment, and we found two jars full of rum under a camouflage-net. Owing to their commanding position on the Roulers Ridge, the Germans were able to lay their heavy guns on us over open sights, and, taking advantage of this, they bombarded us savagely without a moment's respite day or night. Our casualties were heavy: in seven weeks we had no less than 63 killed and wounded – half our strength – and thirteen guns completely destroyed by the enemy's fire – that is to say, all the guns of the battery were knocked out of action more than twice over. It may appear foolish that so exposed a position should have been selected in which to bring guns into action, but, where every yard of the line for hundreds of miles of front must be occupied, such faulty sites are inevitable. Indeed, my general some years afterwards expressed to me his regret at having been compelled to order me into action in such a dangerous spot. I there and then told him, somewhat bitterly, that I thought my men might at least have been awarded a few more

decorations for having stuck it for six weeks as they did under such terrible conditions.

Our wagon-lines were at Vlamertinghe, some eight miles or so from the gun positions; in this hateful Ypres Salient, however, neither cover nor protection was available; our teams, being tethered to their lines in open fields in full view of the German captive-balloons, were exposed to Artillery fire by day, and to bombs from aeroplanes by night. Indeed, a night spent in the wagon-lines was more trying to the nerves than one on duty in the gun positions. I have known the enemy's bombing planes to come over three times in the dark hours to discharge their death-delivering cargoes on our poor horses: we had seven hundred of the unfortunate beasts slaughtered in six weeks in our brigade, and their terror and sufferings were heart-rending to witness. As a result of modern civilisation, many a man, who might be haunted with remorse for his life after slaying a soldier by sticking a bayonet into him, would not lose his appetite for a single meal after dropping a bomb from an aeroplane upon a town, and thereby killing or maiming several innocent children of tender years.

There is something terrifying about bombs: they fall vertically, and so one feels that there can be no protection against them; whereas the flimsiest fortification, or the shallowest trench, gives a sense of security against shells even from high-angle fire. When a bomb drops from immediately overhead, a rustling noise can be heard as it falls through the air, and the whole ground in the neighbourhood seems to be lifted by its explosion. I could never grow accustomed to bombs, and lying sleepless at nights, listening to the dreadful hum of the engines of the approaching bombing planes, like the buzz of some foul, venomous insects, drawing inexorably nearer and nearer, I have shivered and turned cold with horror. In the gun positions the conditions of life were unspeakable. It was impossible to lie down or stretch one's limbs anywhere; we used to squat, perched upon ledges or

shelves, in the pill-boxes – the name given in the Press to the reinforced concrete shelters made by the Germans, which we occupied on their retreat; we perched thus, because the floors of these bomb-proofs were dark pools of turbid water filled with rotting corpses and other nameless horrors. Outside, the ground was puckered with shell craters, filled with the same foul, stagnant liquid, their edges dyed yellow with gas-stains. Decaying human remains were everywhere in evidence: dead bodies in fantastic attitudes; blackened arms and legs sticking out of the mud; hideous skulls and faces stiffened in death with expressions of agony and terror.

I do not believe I ever slept for a single minute in the gun position, so great was the nervous tension which I suffered. I tried all the devices recommended to the sleepless: I must have counted millions of sheep passing through gaps, and I recited Gray's 'Elegy' again and again, without being, for a moment, 'to dumb forgetfulness a prey!' I made it a rule to walk round the guns between three and four o'clock each morning. One night, I came upon a fine, stalwart N.C.O. whom I had recommended for the D.C.M. for gallantry in action. His nerves were utterly shattered. He was sobbing like a child, and moaning: 'Oh, my God! Take me away from this. Take me away!'

We were forbidden to touch any save the chlorinated water sent up to the front line in petrol-tins, slung on the backs of pack-horses, which our drivers used to lead along the duckboard tracks under the cover of darkness; those poor beasts which stepped or stumbled off these narrow causeways were often drowned in the liquid mud, or died of exhaustion after struggling for hours in a quicksand. Right in front of our observation post there was one shocking sight which for many days was never absent from our eyes: some unhappy wretch, wounded and caught in the quagmire, had stiffened his muscles in a dying impulse to keep his head above water, and so death had caught him, and *rigor mortis* had frozen his last muscular effort in such fashion

that his poor dead bust remained above the waters of the flood, a stark memorial of his courage and of the abiding horrors at Passchendaele.

The acrid smells of phosgene gas or of decaying corpses which lingered about the shell craters, and the appalling sights surrounding us, made it difficult for us to swallow our bully beef or Maconochie rations: my gorge rose at the sight of the emerald-green flies which, on hot days, swarmed about us, now settling upon dead bodies, now upon our food.

My washing ration was a small tin cupful of water: with half of this I used to clean my teeth, and with the other half I shaved. One morning, balancing myself on a piece of corrugated iron on the brink of a shell-hole, I was about to begin my ablutions, when my toothbrush, slipping from my hand, fell into the liquid filth below me. I was muttering oaths of vexation, when just at that moment I espied the orderly picking his way through the maze of shell craters to bring me the day's operation orders and a packet of letters which had arrived from England; amongst my mail was a small parcel from my wife, containing a new toothbrush.

During the first week of September, the weather being foggy, heavy, and without a breeze of any sort, the enemy inflicted a series of phosgene-gas attacks upon us: for five nights in succession we had our box-respirators in use, and one night I wore my mask for eight hours. I was seated in my bivouac, which was under an 'elephant-back' rainproof shelter, hearkening to the deep reedy note made by the gas-shells in their flight, and the plunk, plunk as they struck the mud and hissed out their deadly liquor, when I received a telephone call from Corporal Osman, who reported that some poor fellow, evidently badly wounded, was screaming somewhere in the neighbourhood, and he asked if he might leave his post in order to try and find and succour the man. After handing over to my senior subaltern, I crept outside, and, by feeling my way along the telephone-wire – because,

in a mask, in the fog at night, I found myself to be as blind as a mole – succeeded in crawling on all fours to the battery signals shelter. Corporal Osman having placed his telephone in charge of a bombardier, together we started out to search for the wounded man, whose cries were growing fewer and fainter. Crawling about with the slow, deliberate movements of a sloth, it took us nearly an hour to find him. I had never contemplated how helpless one might be in a box-respirator: blind and dumb, I realised, too, that the very slightest movement made me pant and my heart to beat rapidly just as if I had run a race being in the very poorest condition of training. On discovering the unfortunate sufferer, we learned that, as he lay asleep, a gas-shell had struck him on the legs, severing them below the knees. He was lying in great pain alongside a chum, who was endeavouring to cheer and comfort him. Both had torn off their masks to scream for help; but the unwounded man had readjusted his own after insisting on refixing his friend's. With much difficulty, and always feeling our way about like blind men, we secured a stretcher and despatched the injured to the nearest aid-post, his faithful comrade acting as one of the bearers. And all this while the gas-shells gurgled over us, or fell with a horrid 'plunk' into the sodden ground quite close. On reaching the dressing-station, the unwounded gunner, who had removed his mask to call for help for his chum, dropped down dead, while he who had lost his legs only survived two days.

Of all the aching horrors which the soldier must stiffen his will to endure in the trenches – the dirt, the blood, the vermin, the stink, the pain, the fear – nothing to my mind is so soul-shaking as the ceaseless din of the firing. One morning, after a sleepless night, my nerves at high tension, feeling that I could not tolerate the oppressive atmosphere of a pill-box, I was walking to and fro outside; the tardy autumnal sun had not yet dispersed the mists of dawn; white

fog, swept into swathes by the caprice of breezes or the bursts of shrapnel, hung over the flooded banks of the Steenbeck, concealing from view the enemy's gun positions; an acrid smell of chlorine gas pervaded the air, and the ceaseless whining overhead of long-range shells was punctuated by the ear-splitting crashes of those which, exploding near me, sent up spouting columns of mud and water, clods of earth and showers of filth raining down continuously. An Artillery subaltern of a battery in the division on our left called to me three or four times from a bomb-proof shelter: 'For God's sake, major, come inside here!' He was so insistent that at last I gave way, and walked over to the pill-box; just as I stepped inside the entrance, and was standing for the moment in the actual frame of the doorway, which by its nature is by far the strongest part of the structure, an eight-inch shell, with the roar of an express train, crashed on the roof, and the huge mass of steel and cement cracked, fissures appearing in the ceiling and widening rapidly, as, amidst screams and cries, the tons of masonry collapsed upon the inmates. I alone remained standing, scatheless, but every soul inside was crushed to death. For a few seconds I could not breathe, for the explosion had exhausted the oxygen about me. Although unscratched, I felt sick with horror.

To obtain a few hours respite from the strain of the front line, we occasionally spent a couple of days at Poperinghe, which, though frequently shelled and bombed, was always gay. I used to beg a billet in the convent, where I could always enjoy a peaceful night's rest; the dear old Mother Superior being one of those sublime souls who can create an atmosphere of calm even amidst the clatter and turmoil of war. I took my meals at Skindles or La Poupée, but I preferred the latter, as, owing to my knowledge of French, I became very friendly with *la patronne* and her pretty daughters. La Poupée had some very fair Burgundy for sale,

and warmed by the wine, I used to forget the horrors of the 'Bund,' 'Boche Castle,' 'Cheddar Villa,' and 'La Maison du Hibou' – celebrated pill-boxes along our front line at Saint-Julien. I loved to watch the younger men dancing and singing to the gramophone. Sometimes the hum of the bombing planes would announce their unwelcome approach – and we grew expert at judging their distance from us; we would then crowd into La Poupée's cellars, pushing madame and the girls before us, and, while the bombs were exploding outside, I used to pretend to be stealing madame's choicest Pommard. Years afterwards, when visiting Poperinghe with my wife, *la patronne* of La Poupée – which is now a haberdasher's shop – welcomed me with the cry: '*Mais je te reconnais ! C'est toi le drôle qui me chipait mon vin dans la cave pendant les bombardements !*'

For some weeks our infantry had been held up by a machine-gun well concealed amongst the tombs in the old cemetery at Saint-Julien, and we battery commanders were exhorted by the general to locate it. On the 12th of September, accordingly, accompanied by Corporal Osman, I started at an early hour to reconnoitre the front line. The headquarters of the company of the battalion holding that sector were in a pill-box known as the 'Bund' on the western bank of the Steenbeck River; there I was able to study the map as well as some aerial photographs in the hands of the captain in command.

'Are we not very near the German front line ?' I asked.

'Yes, very near,' replied the officer, 'but the Huns never fire during the day for fear of revealing their positions. I fancy their machine-gun is hidden somewhere amongst those gravestones.'

The aspect in front of me was dreary and mournful to a degree, there being a sea of mud, pools of stagnant water, much of the debris of battle scattered about, and several dead bodies lying on the ground: it was, indeed, no man's land; but in the Ypres Salient, where no trenches could be dug,

the exact location of the enemy's lines was difficult to define.

'Have you any outpost in front of this?' I asked.

'Yes,' reported the captain. 'If you follow that duckboard track which passes diagonally across the ruins of the cemetery wall for 120 yards or so, you will come upon our picket, a subaltern with four men and a Lewis gun: they are there, where you can see a fold in the ground and some brambles.'

'Do you relieve your outpost by daylight?' I enquired.

'Never,' the officer continued. 'The men file back one by one under the cover of darkness, but I occasionally send an orderly across, and he is never fired upon. I am quite sure, if you wish to go there, the Huns will not shoot you: it is not worth their while to give away their well-concealed position for the sake of "bagging" a man or two. Walk quickly; do not loiter or look round. You are really far safer there than a quarter of a mile back, where they might turn a couple of field-guns on you from their batteries.'

Accompanied by Corporal Osman, I stepped out of the 'Bund' and strode rapidly along the duckboard track, keeping a sharp look-out on the cemetery. When I had gone half way, I had to step over a human head, with a horrible grin fixed in its features and placed like a Rugby football in the very centre of the path. Just at that moment, glancing over my right shoulder towards the gravestones, I suddenly caught sight of the muzzle of the machine-gun. It was much nearer than I had expected to see it – not more than forty yards away. Indeed, I looked right up the barrel, and my heart stood still. I noticed that it was hidden amongst the broken masonry of a ruined family vault; some sort of a bush or bramble, whose roots, though displaced, were not dead, effectively serving as camouflage.

I hurried on to the fold in the ground where the picket was concealed, and stumbled into the hollow amidst the men of the outpost.

'I have spotted the machine-gun,' I remarked. 'I looked right into its muzzle; it has given me a dreadful sensation.'

'You look as if you had seen a ghost,' remarked the subaltern in charge. 'It must have been horrible ! Sit here for a bit, and I will give you a cup of cocoa.'

I felt at first as if nothing could make me return along that duckboard track knowing that that devilish gun was pointing into my back. But, after composing my nerves with an effort of will, I realised that I had to go back, and the longer I thought about it the more difficult the undertaking might be. So jumping up, and pushing Corporal Osman in front of me, I retraced my steps along the path to the 'Bund.' Hardly had we progressed twenty yards, when Corporal Osman, with a quick, sudden movement, side-stepped to the right, and placed himself behind me, so that he was between me and the enemy's gun, covering me from it. There was no time to wrangle or protest, and I just had to continue on my way ; but I have seldom in my life felt so moved as I did by this very noble gesture of my gallant signaller. When we had reached a point half a mile further to the rear, the Germans opened fire on us with two field-guns, and we were kept busy dodging the projectiles which screamed over and past us : now quickening, now slackening, our gait, so as to baffle the aim of their gunners. Near 'Cheddar Villa' one shell came so close to me that, had I not flung myself to the ground, I must have been caught by it : I felt its wind.

During that afternoon my gun positions were so heavily bombarded that I found it impossible to range on the machine-gun concealed in the gravestones, though I found it quite easy to spot the family vault where I had marked it down. The exact position, however, was reported to other batteries of the brigade, and our Infantry had no difficulty in storming Saint-Julien that night, the enemy falling back towards Roulers.

The official report of these operations states that my battery was heavily shelled for seven hours, and all my guns were buried. We succeeded, however, in getting three of them into action before nightfall, and so were able to

participate in the attack on the cemetery. An eight-inch shell fell very near me during the battle, and either the concussion, or fright, knocked me head over heels, and when I recovered I found my knee so badly contused that I had to sit on the ground all through the night in great pain. As in the morning I could not put my foot to the ground, I had to be carried to the nearest aid-post, where an American doctor attended to me under very heavy fire. He was a newcomer to the front, and, although badly scared by the din and concussion of the exploding shells, contrived to do his duties with the devotion we are accustomed to associate with his noble profession. I was whisked away in a motor-ambulance before noon, and by midnight found myself comfortably lodged in the officers' hospital at the Hotel Splendide at Wimereux within a stone's throw of the fields where as a child I had learned to play cricket, under the shadow of the Great Napoleon's Column. Those fields to-day comprise the British war cemetery, and 3,000 of our gallant dead are taking their last rest beneath the meadows where the little boys of Old Blackader's school used to play with bat and ball in the days of Queen Victoria.

In three weeks, my swollen, bruised knee yielding to the treatment in the hospital, I was back again at my post, and found my battery had moved forward to the very banks of the Steenbeck River. For my work on the 12th of September, I received a letter of thanks from the general and an immediate award in the field of the D.S.O.

On the 5th of October, zero hour being at 6 a.m., we were ordered to fire a barrage with twenty-three lifts to cover the advance of our Infantry. Ten minutes before the whistle called to our men to go over the top, the enemy opened a very heavy bombardment on us, and Lieutenant Budgen and Sergeant Wynne were killed, while our number one gun was put out of action. Lieutenant Wright, M.C., a splendid officer, a civilian who had joined up for the War, received a terrible wound, his lower jaw being shattered; notwithstanding

the agony which he was suffering, this brave fellow with Spartan courage, by his gestures and demeanour, encouraged his men to stick to their guns. Corporal Osman, too, lost his sight temporarily through a shocking injury to his forehead, the flesh of the upper part of his face, being torn away, was hanging down over his eyes; despite his blindness, this noble N.C.O. insisted on helping to tear away the ruins of the telephone shelter with his hands in order to rescue his comrades buried beneath the debris.

After completing our barrage, we were called upon, during the afternoon and evening, to repulse no less than three counter-attacks, so that it came about that in the twenty-four hours, with only five guns in action, we fired five thousand and fifty rounds of ammunition. We had the very greatest difficulty in keeping our guns cool, and I have seen water poured into the breech of a field-piece come out of the muzzle as steam.

I tried to obtain a Victoria Cross for Corporal Osman: he thoroughly deserved it, but he received no decoration whatever. In after years, General Lambert, who was subsequently foully murdered by the Sinn Feiners, told me that he had investigated many of the claims for Victoria Crosses at the front. He found that, whereas the Government insisted on all the Colonial recommendations being granted, only twenty-five per cent of the English claims were successful: this struck Lambert as being grossly unfair.

The English Army has been described by cynics as an Army of heroes led by donkeys: this is most unjust to our regimental officers, who are the very salt of the earth, and are unequalled throughout the world! But, in our higher commands, officers were often apparently wholly devoid of intelligence. Thus I was ordered one night, during operations in the Ypres Salient, to advance my guns immediately to the banks of the Steenbeck River: this was impossible, as the ground there had become a swamp in which neither man nor horse could stir, but must have been drowned in a

quagmire directly he stepped off the causeways made by the R.E. I was actually threatened with arrest for expostulating !

My leg, at about this time, began again to give me trouble, and my old enemy, laryngitis, attacked me during the severe weather early in November ; so, as I was then in my fiftieth year, the chief medical officer ordered me to be invalided to England. Feeling sure that this must be the end of my career as a regimental officer, I addressed the following farewell to my battery :

In the Field, 8.11.17.

Officers, N.C.O.s and men of A Battery 291st Brigade R.F.A. (otherwise the 2nd line 4th London Battery T.F.), it having been decided by the Senior Medical Officer of the 18th Corps that, by reason of my age and almost chronic laryngitis, I am no longer fitted to serve as a battery commander at the front, the time has come for me to say farewell. I thank you for your faithful service to your King and Country during the time I have commanded you.

I shall always feel that the decoration which I have been awarded was won for me by you.

The stout hearts of the drivers and the unquenchable valour of all ranks at all times in the gun positions have enabled you to maintain the high standard expected of London Territorials.

I wish you all God Speed !

On pulling out of action a few days later, my battery was cheered by the Infantry, which we had been covering, drawn up on either side of the road to see us pass.

All manner of writers, in prose and verse, have sung the praises of their favourite troops : but I do not believe there were any at the front superior to our Cockney soldiers ; their humour, too, at times was sublime. Once a captain in the Queen's Regiment, arriving in the trenches from leave, informed his men that there was excellent news from the East, and that a certain well-known Colonial division had successfully occupied Bethlehem.

'My !' retorted one of the Londoners. 'Them blinking shepherds won't 'arf 'ave to watch their flocks by night !'

Reflecting on the far-reaching results of the Battle of the Passchendaele Ridge, seventeen years after having taken part in it, I have come to the conclusion that it revealed the limitations of Sir Douglas Haig in the art, if not in the science, of war. Its heavy casualties and unspeakable horrors reduced to a very low ebb the *moral* of the British troops which had patiently borne their losses on the Somme without a murmur, because the Somme did not seem to them so utterly useless and unnecessary as Passchendaele. My own belief is that this battle lowered not only the *moral* of our Army, but that of our country for an age: much of the unhealthy 'pacifism' of the youth of England to-day being due to the massacre of our soldiers in the swamps of Flanders in 1917, while their leaders, military and political, looked on.

CHAPTER XVIII

GRAND QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL

Et leur âme chantait dans les clairons d'airain.

VICTOR HUGO

ON arrival in London, I was taken to Sir John Ellerman's hospital in Regent's Park, and there, in December, a medical board passed me fit for home service. I was posted accordingly to the Artillery of the 73rd Division at Chelmsford.

In the spring of 1918, after our defeat in March, the English Government was dismayed to realise that the Battle of the Passchendaele Ridge had worn the fighting spirit of our soldiers so thin that their *moral* had almost ebbed away, and our man-power was rapidly shrinking. The splendid young manhood of England, which, with an enthusiasm for our cause which was sacred, had flocked from schools and universities into the ranks of our armies, had been dissipated in the futile attacks on the Somme and in Flanders.

One of the most puzzling features of the Great War is that, although the population of the British Empire available for fighting is considerably larger than that of France, and despite the far heavier casualties suffered in battle by the French troops, the man-power of England became exhausted almost as soon as that of France.¹ France has a conscript Army, England a professional, long-service, mercenary Army, recruited for pay, generally speaking, from citizens who cannot obtain civil employment; it would appear,

¹ On the 2nd of May, 1918, at Abbeville, Foch said: 'It is undeniable that the British Army is now exhausted. Why, if Germany, with a population of 68 millions, can find 204 divisions, can the British Empire, with a population of 46 millions, only maintain 53 divisions (including five American divisions) on the Western Front?'

therefore, that conscription is the more economical system of supplying cannon-fodder for war !

When the news of the disaster to the 3rd and 5th British Armies reached London in March 1918, General Sir Robert Hutchison, the director of public services, was invited to attend a Cabinet meeting ; he told me that the pusillanimous character of some of our Ministers was painful to behold ; about the only man who kept his head and showed courage was Mr. Lloyd George, most of the rest were a craven lot !

It was immediately decided to break up the 73rd Division and draft its effectives to the front to fill up the gaps caused by our heavy casualties. I thereupon applied at once for another medical board, and succeeded in persuading the doctors comprising it to pass me fit for duty in the field. So I again embarked for France, and by the second week in April I was once more at Harfleur. My old friend and brother officer, Major Broadrick, having died very suddenly of heart disease, I was appointed temporarily to succeed him as second in command of the Horse and Field Artillery Base.

My knowledge of French having come to the ears of General Noel Birch, the Artillery adviser to the Commander-in-Chief, however, I was ordered to report as a liaison officer to Général de Mitry, commanding D.A.N. (*Détachement des Armées du Nord*), which was helping the British to hold their positions near Bailleul, in jeopardy ever since the heavy defeat suffered by our 3rd and 5th Armies in March. Général de Mitry used to be sarcastic at the expense of the British Field Artillery, the smartness of whose horse teams and wagon-lines failed to impress him. 'Your Field Artillery,' he used to remark, 'appear to think that their principal function in this war is to gain prizes at horse-shows and riding competitions, not to kill Germans !'

Our headquarters were at Esquelbec, a picturesque Flemish town with an old castle famous for having afforded

stable accommodation to the same English regiment of dragoons in three successive centuries: under Marlborough, Wellington, and Haig.

I commenced my service attached to the staff of the French Artillery on the day when the Allies lost Mont Kemmel to the enemy. While walking along the Cassel Road I came upon a French general seated upon a milestone, looking quite woebegone; with his head held in his hands, he kept repeating: '*C'est la fin: et quelle paix, mon Dieu, quelle paix!*' He was on the brink of tears in anticipation of the terrible peace which he foresaw would be imposed upon France by her cruel, ruthless foes in their hour of victory. At that time, and for many weeks after the rout of the right wing of our 3rd Army, and the disastrous retreat of General Gough which ensued, both the Americans and the French were convinced that the *moral* of the British troops had sunk so low that they could no longer be depended upon to hold the line; this, combined with the loss of Mont Kemmel, for which the French Infantry were chiefly responsible, caused consternation in the French staff. I contrived to cheer up Général Maurin – for so he was named – reminding him that modern experiences of war had proved that, although a victorious army may advance, it never, after severe fighting, has the 'legs' to advance very far. I pointed out, too, that Mont Kemmel could easily be recaptured by concentrating the fire of all de Mitry's heavy guns upon the lost position: and artillery sufficient to cover three army corps was available; finally I entertained him with a few choice Rabelaisian anecdotes, so that before we parted he was roaring with laughter and vowing that I knew more French than all the rest of the British Army.

Général Maurin, who after the war became Inspector-General of the French Artillery, a member of the Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre, and in 1934 Ministre de la Guerre, was very young for a French general, being under fifty years of age; he was the principal exponent of the scientific method

of bringing to bear accurate fire upon the enemy from a mass of batteries without any previous ranging or registering of targets by the guns, and, under Général Malcor, was largely responsible for the great victory won by the French near Reims on the 15th of July, 1918, which first changed the tide of war in our favour. Maurin was an artilleryman of undoubted genius, and he often used to say to me: 'Napoleon and the horse are jointly responsible for having ruined the French Artillery.' He mechanised the field guns, and insisted on battery officers knowing the calibration and range-tables of their guns by heart, besides being able to ascertain at any time the meteorological conditions of the atmosphere, as well as the strength and direction of the wind, before opening fire upon the enemy. He became my great friend; it was through him that I received my appointment on the *Grand Quartier Général* of the French Army, and while we were in garrison at Metz, he taught me to sing '*Le chant de l'artilleur*' – the hymn to Sainte Barbe, the patron saint of all gunners and sappers. Whenever I meet him in Paris nowadays, we exchange the famous password: '*Vivent l'amour et le bon vin !*'

The reputation of our troops was restored, relatively to that of the French, when, in June, the French themselves, in their turn, suffered severe reverses and were driven back to the Marne. At this period the *moral* of the Allies was at its lowest ebb, and their hopes of ultimate success were based upon the expected arrival at an early date of the American Army in the field. Many bitter remarks have been passed since the Great War because the Americans claim to have won it. It is, indeed, galling and exasperating for those of us who, before Uncle Sam's intervention, bore the burden and heat of some forty-seven months of battle, of bloodshed, and of hardship, to hear the victory claimed by Americans who bore that burden and that heat for a few weeks only. Nevertheless, the truth must be faced: by the summer of

1918 both the English and French had exhausted their resources of man-power.¹ British Infantry Divisions had been reduced from twelve to nine battalions in order to give verisimilitude to the fiction invented and promulgated by politicians that our strength in 1918 on the Western Front was as great as in 1917; besides, we had no effectives to form a mass of manœuvre, or even a reserve.

When, in the late autumn of 1918, during the armistice, the Americans had become very unpopular, more especially with staff officers of the French Army, I heard a young officer rebuked by a marshal of France for saying that he wished the Americans had never intervened in the war.

'Never say that,' retorted the Field-Marshal. 'If the Americans had not come in with us, we could never have carried out our offensives in the summer which led to final victory. The best we could have hoped for was stalemate; we might have had to negotiate peace terms with a victorious, if war-weary, enemy securely entrenched on the soil of our beloved fatherland !'²

It is impossible to exaggerate the tremendous moral effect of the arrival in the field of operations of a million fresh American troops, eager for battle, upon the exhausted soldiers who for four years had waded through the mud and the blood of the Western Front. On the one hand, the fighting spirit of the English and the French was rekindled by a flame of enthusiasm, by the certain hope of victory, and by renewed confidence in the justice of their cause. On the other hand, the Germans became suddenly demoralised : their steadfast faith in the invincibility of German arms crumbled before the manhood of America ; the sword of the Teuton slipped from his grasp : '*Telum imbelle sine ictu.*'

When the army of the intrepid General Mangin recaptured

¹ In 1916 Lord Lansdowne wrote : 'In the matter of man-power, we are nearing the end.'

² 'In June 1918 the moral of the French and British was very low' (p. 451, *My Experiences in the Great War*, by John J. Pershing).

Laon, an American colonel, in my presence, questioned a German officer who had fallen a prisoner of war into our hands.

‘How many American troops do you suppose we have ready to go into the line this week?’ enquired my friend.

‘I do not know,’ replied the German officer; ‘perhaps two hundred thousand.’

‘Would it surprise you to learn,’ added the American colonel, ‘that we have one million effectives here in France, ready to fight?’

‘Well, then, you’ve won,’ sighed the German, a shadow of depression darkening his face, ‘because, for the last two months, we have been scraping the bottom of the barrel to find reinforcements.’

The tide of war turned on the 15th of July, 1918, when the French, having obtained information of the impending German attack near Reims, withdrew their Infantry from the front line and met the enemy’s assault with a terrific bombardment of Artillery which had been concentrated expressly for the purpose. The German losses were appalling, and the German Army suffered such a defeat that it lost its *moral*, never again to recover it. To Général Malcor, a great French gunner, and to Général Maurin, must be given the credit of organising this defence: guns were secretly assembled from different parts of the line, and all the bombardments were opened without any preliminary ranging or registration of targets; so that the Germans were taken completely by surprise at the unexpected strength of the Artillery against which they had so rashly hurled themselves. These operations must remain for ever the model of what an Artillery defensive action should be: it is undoubtedly the greatest victory ever won in the world’s history by the applied science of the scientific arm of the service. It was in this battle that motor-borne field guns were used on a large scale for the first time. The mobility of this nature of Artillery made a great impression on me: I saw a battery in

action against the enemy which exactly twelve hours previously had been firing on the Germans from another position seventy-five miles distant; that is to say, the guns had ceased firing, been limbered up, transported with abundant ammunition along roads for one hundred and twenty kilometres, and had come into action again in less than twelve hours.

Two days after this Battle of Reims, Marshal Foch delivered his successful counter-attack against the western flank of the salient which had been formed between Soissons and Reims when the Germans in June advanced as far as the Marne.

Nothing has ever impressed me so much as the skill, intelligence, and industry of the French staff officers while I was with them: they worked so hard that they never seemed to have time for food, sleep, or play. They were all highly trained men of brains and ability: it was quite amazing how, without any fuss or ostentation, they got things done. When some movement of headquarters became necessary, the maps, telephone wires, and instruments would vanish, and, when I arrived at the new quarters, lo ! there they were, all in their places, and the staff working as though they had been in the same spot for months. With similar skill and experience at their H.Q. in August 1914 the Germans would have defeated the Allies in six weeks.

The French staff officers, in contrast to the English, were always hard at work from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve, their noses to the grindstone, and undoubtedly their health suffered therefrom: but they argued with wisdom that a deplorable impression might be created upon the civil population bearing the heavy burden of war if French officers were to be seen indulging in amusements; moreover, they realised that, if one of their number were to be incapacitated from overwork, there were others to take his place. The English, on the other hand, believe that no man can give of his best who is not physically fit, and so several hours

each day were set apart for relaxation and games. In the Peninsular War, Wellington encouraged hunting, and himself participated in the sport. When it was proposed that a drag should be run in France in 1915, consternation reigned at G.Q.G., and the French persuaded the English Commander-in-Chief to forbid it; howbeit, the casual observer might carry away the impression that, to an English general and his staff, the War was something of a picnic, and that any amount of time was available for puerile enjoyment. It was rare, too, to find an officer in the higher ranks who was not convinced of his own indispensability: thus, throughout the British Army, the conduct of Generals FitzClarence, Capper, and Thesiger, who fell leading their men in the firing-line, was generally condemned, it being said: 'That is not a general's job!' In the French Army, on the contrary, those brave leaders would have been unanimously praised; it would have been argued that, valuable as were their lives, their deaths were sublime sacrifices, and most precious contributions to the worth and valour of the nation's soldiers.

There is a peculiar and offensive snobbishness prevailing amongst French staff officers, which is happily quite unknown in our own Army; it springs from their intellectual arrogance; thus a *breveté de l'École de Guerre* looks down upon a *non-breveté*, and particularly upon those who belong to the ancillary services; moreover, if he be attached to the *Troisième Bureau* (Operations), he is somewhat contemptuous of all others, which, to an outsider, is strange, as the *Deuxième Bureau* (Intelligence) appears the more efficient. Nevertheless, the French Army is richly endowed with noble characters, officers wholly devoid of personal ambition, whose lives and fortunes are consecrated, without a single thought of their own interests, to their duty to France; men such as Joffre, Maunoury, and Maud'Huy. A certain Colonel Pellé, when appointed major-general, refused promotion on the grounds that it might appear unfair to his comrades, he being too junior: in the French Army the major-general is

the chief of the *Troisième Bureau* (Operations), responsible for the order of battle. The valour and self-sacrifice of French regimental officers in August 1914 was sublime, there being more than 4,000 casualties before the 1st of September. 'My God, my God, give me back my officers !' was the despairing cry of a corps commander during the Great Retreat, as he watched his companies filing past him under sub-lieutenants and sergeants.

The ideal of French officers is a profound sense of duty to the fatherland and the Army: such intense bitterness as was manifested towards the unhappy Dreyfus arose from the resentment felt because he was not willing, even though wrongfully convicted, to sacrifice himself to preserve the honour of the Army; the hideous injustice to the Jew excited little indignation amongst French officers.

The contrast between the prestige of the Artillery arm in the French and English Armies is remarkable: boasting in its proud traditions the mighty names of Turenne, Napoleon, and Foch, as well as the credit for those decisive victories Formigny,¹ Castillon¹ and the Marne, the Artillery in the French Army is supreme and unrivalled.

His mathematical trend of mind makes a Frenchman naturally a good gunner in these scientific days, and I have seen N.C.O.s, without any officer being present, conducting an experiment in ranging by high air-bursts, which involves knowledge of higher mathematics. The skill and accuracy with which lines of fire are laid out, observation posts chosen, and datum points in the field of fire selected, identified, and located on maps and by sketches are most impressive in the French Artillery; in each unit there is an officer, known as *orienteur*, who is responsible for this duty. Indeed, all the scientific calculations of the French Artillery are admirable, and won the praise of the foreign *attachés*. The professor of

¹ Battles which in 1450 and 1453 finally expelled the English from Normandy and Aquitaine, and in which Artillery played a great part.

higher mathematics from the *École Normale* was present at the front, and used to help gunner-officers with the more complex problems which might arise; he was given the honorary rank of full corporal.

The French Infantry has supreme confidence in the prowess of the gunners who support them, and the achievement of having won and retained this confidence throughout the War is perhaps the French Artillery's principal claim to efficiency.

On the outbreak of war, the French seventy-five millimetre field-piece was literally beatified: *Sainte Soixante-quinze's* chief virtue lay in its hydro-pneumatic mounting – its hydraulic brake and pneumatic recuperator. I believe this invention, in its crude form, was offered to, and rejected by, Krupp. It would not work smoothly for some time, and then only when nitrogen gas was used, instead of air, in compression. The secret of the hydro-pneumatic brake was jealously guarded for years, and one of the charges against the unfortunate Captain Dreyfus was that he had divulged it. The secret lies in avoiding oxidisation and any voltaic action arising from the proximity of two different metals in the fittings. The steadiness of the piece when in action is largely due to the method of anchoring the wheels to the ground, so that the gun recoils and runs forward again after being fired without in any way disturbing the stability of its mounting, thus any number of rounds can be fired without it being necessary to relay the gun on its target.

In the French Artillery, horsemastership was vile – so vile, in fact, that similar neglect in England might provoke the R.S.P.C.A. to interfere; also march and fire discipline were vastly inferior to ours. Général Malcor, the great Artillery tactician, told me that what the French Artillery may gain over the British by superior science it often loses by carelessness, slackness, and negligence. The French admire the splendid turn-out of our batteries – what they call *tenue*; their own is like that of the raggle-taggle gipsies !

Our Horse and Field Artillery were justly proud of their driving and leading of gun-teams, which is, of course, supreme in the world, no other nation's Artillery drivers being able to approach ours in skill and horsemanship. Général Malcor used to praise the English methods, as he appreciated how they made for discipline and accuracy. I overheard Général Herr, the Inspector-General of French Artillery, say to an American officer: 'If you wish to know what smartness, turn-out, and march discipline should be, go and watch the British Artillery advancing along our roads: or, better still, when they are pulling out of action, and might be expected to be battle-stained !'

Everyone who encountered him in the Great War was impressed with the patience, courage, and courtesy of the *poilu*, yet, compared with the life of our Tommy Atkins, his is indeed a hard one: his ration of meat is inferior in quality and quantity; he is expected, notwithstanding, to accomplish harder tasks than the English private during a campaign; it is my belief that he can march longer distances and carry heavier loads because he enjoys a daily allowance of wine – *pinard*, as it is called by the French conscripts. For the manual worker, this wine is a most precious, wholesome food, the value of which is wilfully ignored or denied by our more rabid and obstinate teetotallers. There can be no doubt whatever that our soldiers would be better in health and strength if, instead of their heavy food-ration, they were to receive a smaller portion of meat, less tea, and a quart of beer daily. Generally speaking, I believe the French have more endurance than the English – indeed, the history of their wars proves it. On the other hand, contrary to popular opinion, the *poilus* are greater grumblers than the Tommies; every French soldier whom I met in the trenches seemed to have a grievance, and each one could explain with irresistible logic why he ought not to be engaged in fighting at all !

I often used to accompany French generals on their tours

of inspection, and I was impressed with their patience and gentle manners when discussing schemes with battery officers and perhaps criticising their dispositions. General Herr used to say to me: 'The way to get the best out of any man is to tell him what a fine fellow he is and how well he is doing his job; it never does any good to swear at an officer; if he be slack, your praise or encouragement may shame him into some improvement; a violent reproof or reproach will only make him worse.' An eminent French writer has declared that the defeat of the 6th French Army on the 27th of May, 1918, was due to '*l'irascibilité, la mauvaise humeur et la brutalité de son commandant.*'

The greatest hero in French history is the *bleu*, unshaven and unwashed, his trousers patched with a woman's apron, who won Jemappes, Fleurus, and Wattignies to the chant of the 'Marseillaise'; the beardless peasant-boy in smock and sabots, who licked the Prussians and Russians at Champaubert; or, to come down to our own days, the *poilu*, the hairy, unshaven one, who limped into the line and drove the Prussian and Bavarian Guards back from the Marne. Besides, was Général Gallieni ever disconcerted or abashed when our dandified Cavalry leaders smiled or our dapper subalterns sniggered at those awful yellow, buttoned boots of his?

I remember seeing a divisional general inspecting Freyberg's brigade at Bullecourt, during the bloody combats for the Green Trench. 'I don't like the way that man presents arms!' whined the general.

'Never mind how he salutes, sir,' retorted Freyberg; 'he fights all right!'

The psychology of the *poilu* is vastly different from that of Tommy Atkins. Owing to the highly critical faculty of the French mind and the superior culture and education of many of the conscripts in the ranks of the French Army, French troops always react more than the English to the skill or incompetence of their leaders; thus, in the mutiny

which occurred in June 1917 after the heavy casualties suffered under Nivelle, the mutineers shouted: '*À bas les chefs incapables !*' On the other hand, the general who is deeply concerned in the comfort and welfare of his men can never be unpopular in the English Army, however maladroit he may be as a tactician: this was manifest in the Boer War, especially in Natal.

During a battle, that very great and noble soldier, Marshal Maunoury, always shared the dangers and sufferings of his troops, supporting their *moral* with his presence; and when that – to him – disappointing phase of fighting, trench-warfare, began, he made it a rule always to visit his men in the front line once daily; because, as he used to say, danger should be the same for all ranks. It was thus in the midst of his men, on the 12th of March, 1915, on the Aisne, that he received the shocking wound which destroyed the sight of one eye and from which he never fully recovered.

That splendid officer, General Charles FitzClarence, V.C., fell while leading the 1st Guards Brigade in battle, and for this he has been blamed; but he was undoubtedly right! Great as was his loss to the British Army, the sacrifice of his life was a most precious example of the courage which a leader should always display in a grave crisis. The *moral* of armies is as steel tempered in the flames of self-sacrifice; it can be raised or lowered by the valour or pusillanimity of their leaders; thus Saint Joan converted the beaten French into an all-conquering army. According to their *moral*, armies may be composed of giants or pigmies. No one, perhaps, ever realised this less than Kitchener; no one ever understood it better than Cromwell.

The *poilu* obtained his *sobriquet* in the early days of the War, when the French soldiers never used to shave themselves; but when box-respirators were issued to troops as protection against gas he ceased being, strictly speaking, a *poilu*, as it was discovered that a gas-mask would not fit closely over a beard, thus all the French soldiers were

ordered to shave themselves daily; nevertheless the nickname stuck.

When the D.A.N. was broken up in June and its units moved south, I was directed by headquarters to proceed to Conti and await orders. During the second week in July, I volunteered to act as liaison officer to a battalion of tanks which had been detailed to cover the 3rd French Division in a projected assault on Moreuil. This was unlucky for me, as two days later my old friend, Paddy Reed, V.C., commanding the 15th Highland Division, applied for me to undertake similar duties in the important operations south of Soissons, when the enemy was driven back for the second time from the Marne. Thus I missed being present at one of the greatest battles in history.

On the 23rd of July, 1918, the 3rd French Division, under Général Nayral de Bourgon, supported by a brigade of British tanks, opened the attack which led to the fall of Moreuil. One of the great problems before the battle was how to conceal the presence of the tanks from the enemy; so, while they were being assembled at Thory, several noisy aeroplanes were directed to fly to and fro above the German lines in order that the sound of their engines might drown the noise made by those of the tanks. The ruts or tracks made by their pedrails across the fields, too, were carefully raked over and obliterated, so that they might not be revealed in the enemy's aerial photographs taken of our zone. On my suggestion, French helmets were issued to all the personnel of the tanks. This led to a deal of fun and good-natured chaff; our fellows strutting about in their Gallic head-dresses, shrugging their shoulders extravagantly, exclaiming '*Mon Dieu*' and '*Sapristi*' and practising the somewhat ungainly French salute which reminds one of that insolent gesture often exchanged between school-urchins and which is known as cocking a snook !

Our attack was eminently successful all along the front, and by nightfall our lines had stabilised themselves beyond

Sauvillers, with our right flank resting on the Bois du Harpon.

The French were loud in their praise of the tanks, which had saved them many casualties, but ours were heavy indeed, twelve cars being put out of action, and, if I remember rightly, the Tank Corps had ninety-five killed and wounded, and there were far more dead than wounded. I went into the firing-line for a short time in one of these huge armoured cars, and found it most disagreeably hot; but I felt a sense of delightful security when I heard the bullets rattling against the steel walls; just as one often experiences a glow of pleasure seated by a comfortable fireside on a winter's night and listens to the rain and sleet pattering against the windows of one's home.

The Germans put up a tough resistance, their machine-gunners, as usual, displaying great heroism.

A French African battalion on our left advanced magnificently. I have always held Ethiopians in affection, regarding them as brave, cheery, simple folk, and I was thrilled with their courage that day; a black corporal leading his platoon captured a German machine-gun at the point of the bayonet. In the rush at the gun more than half his men had been bowled over by the machine-gunners, who held up their hands and begged for quarter when the stalwart Ethiopians were about twenty yards away. The negro, the light of battle in his eyes, was about to fling himself on the German detachment and finish them off, when he was stopped by a French sergeant.

The negro corporal, maddened at being baulked of his prey, plucked the safety-pin out of a hand-grenade and made a dash at an English Tank officer, mistaking his strange uniform for that of an enemy; but, somewhat puzzled by the French helmet the Englishman was wearing, he stayed his hand just sufficiently for the officer to rush up, catch hold of one of the buttons of the Ethiopian's tunic, and at the same time seize and wring his hand – the left hand, which was

free – and, in halting, Britannic French, pour out compliments on the negro's courage. The negro dared not let go his bomb while the officer was clinging to him like a leech for fear that he might not be able to break away before the grenade exploded; the officer, knowing this, gripped the black corporal like grim death. The situation was a critical one for some seconds, then everyone burst into roars of laughter, the negro himself joining in and hurling his grenade at the Germans, who, ducking down like ninepins, managed to escape the effects of the explosion.

On the battlefield I noticed two gigantic Ethiopians lying stiff and stark, surrounded by five dead Germans whom the negroes had evidently slain in hand-to-hand combat before they fell themselves.

The battle was fought on a brilliant summer's day, and I saw a very handsome French youth lying dead in a field of clover; two beautiful swallow-tail butterflies were playing around his head, which was pillowed on his arm.

During the heat of the battle, I was watching through my glasses a daring German who was peering at us from behind a tree barely two hundred yards away. On a sudden I saw the flash of a shell, which burst apparently right on his face; the decapitated body fell back and lay motionless like a log, while the head, still in its heavy steel helmet, bounced away.

At eight o'clock at night I was standing alongside Général de Bourgon while our prisoners of war filed past us: the usual melancholy column of limping, dusty, depressed looking creatures with that wild staring expression in the eyes which men carry who have just escaped out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The general detained two officers, one a very tall, the other a very short man. In excellent German he put certain questions to them, and then asked if he could do anything for them: they requested a drink of water.

'Certainly,' answered de Bourgon; 'we never refuse water to our prisoners of war. I compliment you,' he added, 'on

the splendid fight you put up. You conducted yourselves like fine soldiers !'

The two German officers drew themselves up as stiff as pokers, saluted, and a glow of pride shone in their faces.

I was deeply impressed by the valour and sincerity of a French priest who was serving in the ranks as a *simple soldat*; never sparing himself, he was at all times in the thick of the battle, exposed to the greatest danger, turning aside from his military duties to shrive the dying or bless the dead. Every morning, as soon as the bugles had sounded *la Diane*, he would hurriedly slip his sacred vestments over his horizon-blue uniform and celebrate mass for the benefit of the faithful. I was profoundly touched when he blessed me and told me how bravely the English officers and men of our Tank Corps had behaved, and how they had saved the lives of very many of his *chers compatriotes*.

The French priests in the war were sublime heroes: men whose courage and self-sacrifice inspired the soldiers and whose sincerity revealed their saintly vocation, their faith in the justice and mercy of their God.

I was very nearly captured by the enemy one morning during the battle. The general having asked me to make enquiries about certain men of our Tank Corps who were missing, I found my way to an advanced dressing-station which had taken up its post in a quarry quite close to the edge of the Bois du Harpon. There I spent fully half an hour, jotting down notes of information given me by the surgeon in charge. I then said good-bye and crawled out of the quarry. I had not proceeded far on my way to the rear when a burst of firing broke out, and, looking back, I descried some German Infantry charging down on the quarry with bayonets fixed. It did not take me long to reach a shelter trench manned by a platoon of grinning negroes, and I dived into their midst laughing heartily. The Germans carried off the surgeon and his assistants prisoners under our very noses. I often wonder if the Boches would have

bayoneted me had I been in the dressing-station when they seized it: I was armed with a revolver, so they might have made that a pretext.

On their Independence Day, the 4th of July, 1918, the Americans first appeared in the line; in co-operation with the Australian Corps and covered by tanks, they captured Hemel, to the east of Amiens. It was then that the magical revival in the *moral* of our troops first became manifest; from that date the British Army may be said to have marched from victory to victory, under its noble-hearted leader, Sir Douglas Haig.

During the first week in August I was chosen to represent the British Artillery at G.Q.G. (*Le Grand Quartier Général*) and was attached to the personal staff of the Inspector-General of French Artillery. I believe my appointment was not popular with the British Mission – composed of Cavalry and Guards officers – and I owe it to Général Maurin, who brought my name to the notice of Marshal Foch at a time when he was pressing G.H.Q. to supply him with a liaison officer who understood gunnery and was perfect in French. I.G.A. used to maintain that I was the only British officer in the world who knew the French for cosine and Jerusalem artichokes!

The danger of appointing anyone but a Gunner to be an Artillery liaison officer should have been patent to General Headquarters: the technical difficulties of gunnery terms are obvious, and, in its subtler *nuances*, French is a tricky language. Thus, until I went to I.G.A., the word *salve* had always been translated *salvo*; now this is just what it does not mean: the French manual of Artillery firing describes *une salve* as a round of battery-fire, each gun being fired at an interval of at least five seconds after the one on its flank.

Before becoming attached to I.G.A. (*Inspection Générale d'Artillerie*) I went to British G.H.Q. at Montreuil to receive final instructions. Strange to say, Montreuil had been the headquarters in 1658 of the 6,000 Englishmen sent by

Cromwell to serve under Turenne and win Dunkerque¹ for England. I joined the French G.Q.G a few days before the British offensive of the 8th of August, which was a very great victory for our arms; indeed, the Germans admit that it was their worst day of the war. Unfortunately, I saw nothing of it. But a few days later I witnessed the storming of the Moulin de Laffaux on the Chemin des Dames by French *chasseurs*: there was, of course, no mill to be seen, it having been pounded into dust some time previously. I confess to having been moved to tears when the gallant *chasseurs*, standing amidst their dead and dying, hoisted their helmets on their bayonets and chanted the 'Marseillaise': the 'Marseillaise' is the one song which can stir my soul to its depths.

The republican spirit of the French abhors the idea of a *corps d'élite* – what the English call a crack corps – so there are no regiments of *chasseurs*, but only battalions which are brigaded with other Infantry, nevertheless the *chasseurs* do seem to be inspired with more French fury in the attack than ordinary troops; besides, it is regarded as an honour for an officer to be appointed to the *chasseurs à pied*; the appointment is temporary, as with our Horse Artillery, no French officer being allowed to remain permanently in the *chasseurs*.

Le Chemin des Dames, so called because it was the road constructed by Louis XV to satisfy the demands of the ladies of his Court, who complained that their coaches used always to be bogged when they went *en villégiature* each summer, follows the watershed of the Rivers Aisne and Oise. Since the very dawn of history it has been the theatre of many a bloody encounter: Cæsar recognised the natural strength of the position for an army posted on its northern side, and awaiting attack from the south; it was there that Clovis in the fifth century defeated Syagrius, and there too that Bouchard de Montmorenci, A.D. 974, overtook Otho II and his raiding Germans, routing him and capturing his eagles. From 1914 to 1918 the tide of war ebbed and flowed across

¹ Dunkerque was sold to France by King Charles II.

the Chemin des Dames; it was upon the Chemin des Dames that the French Army, under Nivelle, suffered such appalling casualties¹ in the spring of 1917, after capturing the German first line, that the soldiers mutinied and Nivelle was deprived of his command.

I accompanied Général Herr when he re-entered Saint-Mihiel immediately after the Germans had been driven out of the town after having occupied it for four years; indeed, we swarmed along a cable over the Meuse before any bridge had been thrown across. The inhabitants consisted of nothing but old folks and children, because the adolescent population of both sexes had been torn from their homes and carried off by the brutal Germans. Many a mother came up to me to ask if I thought the Boches would kill her boy, who had been hauled off by the enemy: I hardly dared reassure them. These poor creatures were a pitiable sight, and were quite cowed, having been bullied most inhumanly by the unspeakable modern Huns during the whole four years of the German occupation. No news had been allowed to reach them, so they seemed dazed, like sleepers awakened after long years. One old Rip van Winkle approached me and touched me with a nervous gesture; he was puzzled by my uniform – my khaki and cap with a scarlet band; I learned from him that they all thought I was a Bavarian officer held as a hostage.

There were many children who had never seen a French soldier; moreover, the old people, expecting to see French troops in scarlet trousers, enquired what were those strange fellows advancing in sky blue and new-fashioned steel helmets.

‘Mais, parbleu, ce sont des poilus !’ I replied.

‘Qu’est que c’est que ça; des poilus ?’ queried an old dame, the nickname being as novel to her as the uniform.

As we passed along the streets, old men, women, and

¹ 117,000 killed and wounded.

children would creep up alongside Général Herr and shyly kiss his hand. The general was devoted to children, and this they soon discovered, so, before we reached the town hall, bands of them in clusters were clinging to the skirts of his tunic. I saw dozens of women, with tears streaming down their cheeks, kneeling in the streets praying and calling down blessings upon their saviours who had rescued them from bondage.

Despite their tears and anxiety for their kith and kin, for the population of Saint-Mihiel the day anticipated by their great national hymn – the day of glory – had arrived !

One day in September I was ordered to go to Villers aux Érables to inspect some captured German material. This proving to be a longer task than I had anticipated, I had to spend a night at Senlis as the guest of a gentleman whose brother had been shot by the Germans in 1914. Indeed, he, too, would have been assassinated by the brutes had he not taken it into his head to ride through the forest to visit a friend early on the very morning when the Germans sent an armed guard to his house to fetch him. On his return at midnight, he was told that the provost-marshal's patrol had called three times for him during his absence; on the following morning, when about to report himself at the provost's office, my host was informed that the Boches had evacuated the town during the night, but before leaving they had shot half a dozen citizens, and amongst them his own brother. Without any extreme bitterness or vindictiveness, my host described to me all the circumstances leading up to his brother's death; he showed me, too, the graves of all the victims, and the marks of the bullets in the wall against which the poor fellows had stood on that evening when they faced the German firing-party; and I came to the conclusion that the massacre was nothing less than wanton, cold-blooded murder for which the enemy cannot have had the faintest excuse or pretext.

It was from my host, too, that I learnt to my dismay and

sorrow that the idea prevailed in France that, in the famous retreat from Mons, the French Army was not well supported by Sir John French, who insisted, so it was alleged, in keeping his troops two days' march in rear of the 5th French Army, commanded by Lanrezac, on his right, and the 6th French Army, being newly formed, on his left; who refused to stand and fight at Guise on the 29th of August, 1914; and who at the Battle of the Marne only came up into the line with the French troops late on the 7th of September, nearly forty-eight hours after the gallant Maunoury had come to grips with the enemy and was fighting for his life.

I was so upset on learning that such feelings regarding our Expeditionary Force prevailed in France that I carefully questioned staff officers, and discovered that the general belief at G.Q.G. was that Lord Kitchener had to be sent for, during the crisis at the end of August 1914, to prevent Sir John French from retiring out of the line to the south of the Seine or even to Nantes. Thus it is that international misunderstandings arise: whereas the English believe that their army saved Paris in 1914, the French consider that the British served them badly.

I was standing in the garden of the château at Villers aux Érables examining the German Artillery stores which had fallen into the hands of the French, when a shell fired from the enemy's lines knocked off one of the extinguisher towers which can be seen on châteaux all over France; it fell on the lawn on its point, and actually spun like a peg-top for a second or so. Amongst the captured trophies we found some clockwork time-fuses: none but the German Artillery was able to produce them, and I have seen the enemy making wonderfully accurate practice with their aid on our captive balloons at 15,000 yards' range.

At Peronne, which was in flames during my tour, I happened upon a battle, and was nearly killed by a British aeroplane which was brought down near me: I had the very greatest difficulty in dodging it as it crashed to earth.

It was while I was watching the passage of the canalised Aisne by the French Artillery, near Berry au Bac, that the War came to an end in November; quite unexpectedly for me, I admit, as I never thought the German *moral* would collapse so suddenly. I had been most anxious to study the behaviour of the famous 155 millimetre G.P.F. (*à Grande Puissance Filloux*) guns which so fascinated the Americans that they had determined to arm their Artillery with vast numbers of them if the War had lasted another year. I found them awkward and cumbersome in traction owing to their wide wheel-tracks; moreover, pontoons and other military bridges were neither strong enough nor wide enough to support the weight and size of such mighty ordnance; so these guns had to be left behind in the advance across the Aisne and no heavier Artillery than the 155 millimetre Schneider cannon actually went forward.

The American Artillery in France was armed entirely with French material; nevertheless they brought over a six-inch cannon of which they were very proud. On the practice-ranges at the Camp de Mailly, however, this weapon behaved in the most eccentric fashion, its extreme limit of range being some 10,000 yards at an elevation of about 27°; the higher the gun was elevated above that angle, the shorter its missile dropped, and, moreover, with every conceivable irregularity; the trouble was eventually traced to the form and excessive spin of the projectile.

I was in Paris for a few days on leave while the monster cannon, known as *La Grosse Bertha*,¹ was bombarding the capital from a distance of over seventy miles: thus confounding all the French gunnery experts who had loudly and arrogantly asserted that no gun could be built capable of carrying more than thirty miles or so. To satisfy the ballistic principles governing practice at extremely long ranges, *Grosse Bertha's* missile was furnished

¹ *Grosse Bertha* had a calibre of 8 inches; not so large as that of the guns which bombarded Arques and Dunkirk in 1917 or Amiens in 1918.

with a false nose-cap – like a very tall dunce's cap – made of thin steel, which, being hollow, was lighter than the body of the shell, so that, when it had attained the highest point of its path through the air – fully twenty miles above the surface of the earth – and had lost its spin and stability, instead of turning over and over as it tumbled to the ground, it fell base-foremost, retained in that position by the lighter nose-cap, just as an arrow is kept point foremost by its feathered shaft.

While in Paris, I was talking to a friend in the Rue Daunou at about noon one day, when one of these unpleasant missiles dropped out of the sky and landed upon the Hôtel de Calais in the Rue des Capucines close by us; another smashed a statue of one of the prophets at the back of the Madeleine; but neither of these did much damage, and everyone in the streets remained calm. The shot which wrought the most destruction was the one which struck a church on Good Friday, 1918, during service, many worshippers being killed; indeed, this one shell alone caused more casualties than all the bombardments of Paris throughout the siege of 1870.

When the Armistice was proclaimed, G.Q.G. moved to Metz, and I accompanied Généraux Herr and Maurin on their entry, with the French Artillery, into that famous fortress as well as into Strasbourg. I witnessed moving scenes as the overjoyed population gave a most cordial welcome to the French troops; the girls, dressed in their picturesque native costumes, insisted on riding upon the cannon; those were, indeed, *les heures merveilleuses d'Alsace et de Lorraine*.

That great gentleman and incomparable soldier, Turenne, said in 1674: 'There should not be at rest in France a man capable of fighting so long as there is a single German on our side of the Rhine in Alsace.' This saying has been forgotten, and in recent years German propagandists have advanced the baseless contention that France has no right to

Alsace-Lorraine ; the universal, intense joy of the inhabitants on the return of the French troops in 1918, which I witnessed, is ample answer to this fantastic pretension. Alsace and Lorraine are rich in French historical traditions : Kellermann, Marshal Ney, and Saint Joan were natives of Alsace or Lorraine ; moreover, these two provinces, together with their cities of Strasbourg and Metz, consecrated their love and fidelity on the altar of France at the celebrated Feast of the Federation of the 14th of July, 1790, on the Champ de Mars in Paris.

The incident which I am about to relate made a great impression upon me. While strolling through the streets of Strasbourg, I absent-mindedly allowed the sword I was wearing to trail along the pavement ; Général Herr (an Alsatian), looking at me with an expression of horror, begged me to lift the scabbard so that it might not clink against the cobblestones. I was puzzled for a moment at his behest, then I suddenly realised that the trailing of a sword in noisy fashion used to be an insolent Prussian gesture, deliberately practised by German officers to express their contempt for the civilian population.

At Metz on the big square I saw President Poincaré, accompanied by Clemenceau, hand to Pétain his Marshal's baton. There were present on parade three Marshals of France ; an English Field-Marshal (Haig) ; and the Commanders-in-Chief of the Belgian, Roumanian, and American Armies, all these eminent soldiers being drawn up facing the statue of Ney, *le Brave des Braves*.

That same evening, Pétain gave a ball. It was a most picturesque affair, the Alsatians wearing their graceful butterfly head-dresses, the Lorraine girls their *Directoire* bonnets : it seemed quite apropos when the band struck up '*Tournez, tournez,*' the well-known valse from *Madame Angot*. The Roman Catholics wore crimson skirts and the Protestants green ones ; when a lady appeared in an orange-coloured petticoat, Maurin exclaimed : 'Why, what's that ?' 'That

must be a Jewess !' I replied. During the evening the veteran statesman Clemenceau, who was seventy-seven years of age and had undergone the dangerous operation for the removal of the prostate gland a few years previously, was not taking part in the dancing ; he passed his time in regaling the other 'wallflowers' with his choicest witticisms. Amongst many brilliant sayings, I overheard him declare, with a sly glance at Poincaré, that he was himself the living proof that, in this world, two things are superfluous : the prostate gland and the President of the French Republic !

A young officer having pointed out that an assertion of 'The Tiger's' was not in agreement with the opinion of Klotz, his own Minister of Finance, Clemenceau, paraphrasing the well-known proverb : '*Qui n'entend qu'une cloche n'entend qu'un son,*' retorted : '*Qui n'entend qu'un Klotz, n'entend qu'un Cxxx !*'

While at Metz, I carefully inspected all the impregnable forts of the entrenched camp and wrote reports on them. When, in the fullness of time, the wheel of international politics has swung through half a circle and England, in alliance with Germany, is at war, championing some 'ism' or making the world safe for some 'cracy' ; when the bust of Hindenburg, Ludendorff, or the Kaiser has replaced that of Napoleon in our naval and military clubs in London, perhaps these reports may be of service !

At Metz, too, on the 3rd of December, Sainte Barbe's day, I was present at the great banquet given by the Inspector-General to all Artillery officers who could attend. Marshal Pétain came in when the wine began to circulate and made the following speech : 'Gentlemen, I suffer under a very great disability : I am not a gunner ! Nevertheless, I endeavour to make up for my shortcomings by having as many Artillery officers on my staff as possible. France has never looked in vain to her Artillery officers. Turenne was a gunner, Napoleon was a gunner, Foch is a gunner ! To-day we say : "The Infantry occupies the ground which has been won for it by the Artillery."' '

During January we foreign *attachés* were escorted round the battlefields of 1870 by Colonel Picot, who gave us lectures on the battles of that war. He told us that Bazaine was playing billiards in Metz while the fighting was in progress at Vionville and Mars-la-Tour, which, with a very little skill on the part of a commander, might have led to a great French victory. I noticed during our tour that the ruins of the hamlet of Borny remained just as they were on the morrow of the combat fought nearly half a century earlier, and I could not help wondering how many of those villages which I had seen pounded into dust in Flanders, Artois, and Picardy in 1917 would ever rise again.

I also visited Verdun. The skeletons of the dead were still lying around the forts to bear witness to the desperate fighting. Standing on some high ground in the town near an old church riddled with shell-holes, I was contemplating the ruins and thinking of my great-grandfather who, as a prisoner of war, had dwelt there more than a century ago, when the sudden, unexpected chimes of a clock in the battered tower above me startled me from my reverie. 'One, two, three, four,' the old clock pealed forth defiantly; and the very air seemed to vibrate with the proudest watchword of the French Army: '*Ils ne passeront pas !*'

In February G.Q.G. returned to Chantilly. Until 1632, when Henri de Montmorenci was brought to the scaffold by Richelieu for complicity in the conspiracy of Gaston d'Orléans, and his lands were held to be escheated to the Crown, Chantilly was the home of the Montmorenci family, and the old town is redolent of them: the Rue des Connétables recalls the memory of their six *comtes de l'étable*; the well-known galloping ground, Les Aigles, takes its name from the eagles on their shield; a portrait of Charlotte de Montmorenci, the mother of the Grand Condé, hangs in the hospital; and a statue of Constable Anne de Montmorenci faces his old castle.

For a week I was a patient at the hospital. One day a visitor was announced. She was a little old lady who looked as though she had stepped out of some Louis Philippe picture. With great dignity she curtsied to me, as a lady of the old Court in the days of ruffles and lace might have saluted some gallant, and introduced herself thus: 'I am the Duchesse de Chartres; Monsieur Macon, the librarian of the *musée*, has assured me that you are a true Montmorenci, and compared with a Montmorenci we Orléans are mere parvenus! I lived as a child in Worcestershire, and I learned to love your English fox-hunting; for many years I have subscribed to the *Field*, the country gentleman's newspaper; see, I have brought you the latest numbers!'

I thanked the old lady, feeling very touched and not a little embarrassed.

It was at Chantilly on the 1st of May, 1919, that I said good-bye to the staff of the I.G.A. I was given a *champagne d'honneur*, and Colonel Carence made me a charming farewell speech.

In reply, I related how, as a cadet, I had vowed that, whatever might befall, I would never fight against France. I told all present how proud I was of my French name and French descent, but that I was proudest of all of my three citations of the *Croix de Guerre* which had been awarded me for services on the battlefields in France.

Passing through Paris on my way to London in May 1919, I caught a glimpse of some of the vast army of experts, clerks, and typists assembled from every corner of Europe and the United States by the politicians in order that their flatulent effusions might be translated into stacks of ink-stained waste paper. And between the intervals of scribbling, this army danced and philandered; youth in the French capital was busy withdrawing its silken dalliance from the wardrobe where it had lain since August 1914. Paris went mad – dancing mad – and the customary consequences flowed from such follies; a lifetime of experience has

taught me that where there is dancing there is usually adultery,!

Occasionally during the Armistice, at the *popotte* of the I.G.A. at Chantilly, we used to receive guests who carried weight in the worlds of politics and journalism. Thoughtful staff officers were not lacking at the mess who took the opportunity of imploring them to mistrust America. 'You will see,' they maintained, 'unless our representatives at this conference force Uncle Sam to pledge himself to bear his fair share of the costs of this war, we wretched Europeans will be dancing to his piping for a century to come.' Alas ! as usual the political bigwigs regarded the peace conference solely as a stage on which to display their rhetorical talents, so that the sufferings of war-shattered peoples and the interests of our burdened taxpayers were ignored. All Europe should have combined to combat the unfair and intolerable exactions of the United States.

Other nations, and more especially the United States of America, have computed – and continue to compute – their war debts in gold dollars ; France reckons her contribution to the common cause of the Allies in her 1,600,000 slain !

CHAPTER XIX

THE SINN FEIN REBELLION

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

1 *Samuel XV.* 23

I RETURNED to England in a snowstorm one Sunday in May 1919, and for more than a year was cooling my heels and awaiting demobilisation in London, suffering the reaction in nerves and sentiments which befalls every soldier at the end of a long period of active service. It is on such occasions that it is possible to understand Sylla and sympathise with even his dark deeds in bad, old Rome. There were moments when I longed to be a Sylla !

Martial sentiments had loomed so large through the smoke of battles for four years that I found it hard to realise that once England had returned to her civilian mood she had nothing to offer to a veteran of two wars who had passed the age of fifty years. Having independent means, moreover, I was hardly in that category of old soldiers whose claims Sir Douglas Haig was generously supporting.

In June I took a trip to Ireland, and soon realised that the witches' cauldron was simmering there ; after having licked for two years the wounds received in 1916, Sinn Fein, convalescent, was sitting up and becoming arrogant. The successful campaign which, during the last stages of the war, had been waged against conscription in Ireland had raised the prestige of the more violent revolutionaries, nor was it difficult to discern the iron hand of the Irish Republican Brotherhood beneath the velvet glove of the Gaelic League. The triumph of Sinn Fein at the polls – they had won 73 out of the 102 Irish seats in the recent elections – was being

acclaimed with pæans of delight throughout the country. The despised 'Mollie Maguires' (Parliamentary nationalists), with their prolix, garrulous – if constitutional – methods, having made their final *exeunt* from the political stage, the standard of revolt was fluttering from the mast.

At the Arts Club and the Dolphin Hotel I met several of my old friends of 1914 – moderate nationalists; but the war had given a jolt to their minds, just as it had given a jolt to mine; it had shifted their political views to the Left, as it had shifted mine to the Right; it had delved an impassable chasm between us. I have been abused by them and charged with being a traitor, not without cause; but I have never been able to discern any virtue in remaining loyal to a belief, be it political or religious, once it has been proved to be false. As a youth I had, perhaps too hastily, espoused the Irish nationalist cause before I had even put foot in Ireland. I never began to comprehend the Irish until the summer of 1914; it required Armageddon and the Irish Revolution with its horrid atrocities to reveal to me the true Celtic Irish character, to lay bare its elements of vanity, treachery, poltroonery, and cruelty. Just as Marat and the September massacres in the French Revolution changed Edmund Burke from a Whig into a Tory, so Roger Casement and the Easter rising almost converted me into a Unionist.

The terrible reality of the sufferings of the French and the Belgians under the iron heels of Prussians and Bavarians, which I had witnessed, had opened my eyes to the meaning of real foreign oppression, and I was able to contemplate Irish grievances in their true perspective; to realise that they have been created by the flapdoodle of assiduous rhetoricians: that, certainly for the past fifty years, they have only existed in the imagination of political propagandists.

All that was best in Irish society must have fled with the 'Wild Geese' in the seventeenth century, how otherwise can be explained Ireland's heritage of an idle, thriftless population from which the criminal classes have too often been

recruited? The gunmen of America are chiefly Irishmen and the records of our police courts are punctuated with Irish names. Now, as I write, Ireland has enjoyed Home Rule for twelve years, and Irishmen from the south or the north, according as their temper moves them, can mourn the blighting of high hopes, or mock the extravagant expectations of the promoters of the enterprise. The very fabric of Sinn Fein¹ was rent when the Germans and Belgians assumed control of Irish industries, and the foreign firm of scavengers took up the task of ministering to the wants of the citizens of Dublin. The native Irishman in his rags, however, his hands thrust deep in his empty pockets, still monopolises the profession of watching the cow grow fat on the rich pastures of Meath and Limerick, as he was wont to do in the 'bad old days,' while he was being 'ground under the heel of the hated Saxon !'

With neither coal, minerals, petroleum, nor the climate to cultivate economically cereals and fruit – raw materials essential to life – Ireland's claim to be self-supporting can never be more than a fantastic dream of fools !

It is not nature, however, which is the Emerald Isle's bitterest enemy, but man: the Irish are perverse, quarrelsome, vain, jealous, and easily influenced by degrading superstitions; they are garrulous, too, being even more readily intoxicated by their own verbosity than the Russians. A convention met in 1917 which nearly succeeded in establishing a United Irish Dominion under the British Empire; its efforts were frustrated by the preciousness of its chairman, Sir Horace Plunkett, the petty spite and political jealousy of Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe, and the recalcitrance and pig-headedness of Ulstermen.

In the last week of June 1919 I was summoned to Paris to receive the *Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* from the hands of Général Herr, the Inspector-General of

¹ Sinn Fein means 'Ourselves Alone.'

Artillery. In the afternoon of the day on which I was decorated I saw the race run for the Grand Prix de Paris, yet I felt sad amidst the gay throng of race-goers, because I encountered so few of my old racing associates in the paddock at Longchamp. Father Time had caught up so many in the compass of his sweeping scythe since the days when I had enjoyed my fleeting triumphs on the French Turf that I felt that I stood alone, gazing back at my youth, with its follies, extravagances, and passions, through a vista lined with the phantoms which haunt the worlds of sport, war, and love. I hastened my departure for London. Paris after the War had lost its charm for me, Americans having imported into the French capital all the apparatus of forbidden joys from the 'red light' and Tenderloin districts of their own corrupt cities; flooding the pleasant land of France with the vulgar intemperance of Chicago, and the flaming debauchery of Hollywood and San Francisco.

For more than a year I remained at home eating my heart out, longing for employment. I endeavoured to soothe my tortured nerves with a little hard reading, studying as a dilettante the philosophic consequences of Einstein's theories. As a result of this study, a few years later I published my pamphlet: *From Kant to Einstein*. This little work met with some small praise, and many, many sneers: the Press treating my metaphysics as years ago they had treated my race-riding. Indeed, the only harvest I have reaped from my toil is a doubt as to the omniscience of the English latter-day Aristotles of Fleet Street. One particularly bright, sapient critic of my brochure sneeringly enquired what necessity there was for reconciling Einstein with Kant, thereby displaying his ignorance of the fundamental arguments used by each of these great thinkers: the one and the other laying the foundations of their systems on their own peculiar interpretations of the nature of Time and Space. Nevertheless, I did receive appreciative letters and notices from Professor Eddington, Lord Haldane, Arnold Bennett, and

from Dr. Théophile Romilly, Professor of Science at Geneva University, where, I believe, Einstein himself used to lecture.

From time to time news of the 'volcanic fires' seething in Ireland trickled through to England in spite of the strange endeavours of the newspapers to suppress the truth. Thus, on Sunday, 7th September, 1919, at half past ten in the morning, eighteen soldiers of the Shropshire Light Infantry, having piled their rifles outside the Methodist Church at Fermoy, were filing in through the door to attend service when three motor-cars dashed up with a party of Sinn Feiners, who opened fire with revolvers upon the unarmed and unsuspecting soldiers at point blank range, and, having seized their rifles, escaped in the cars, leaving a corporal killed outright and three men badly wounded. When the police had obtained automobiles and attempted to follow the attacking party, they found that trees had been felled and hauled across the road to block it; and thus these foul, dastardly murderers escaped scotfree.

All this took place in a populous Irish town in broad daylight, when the victims of the raid, men innocent of any concern in politics, were entering a place of worship; yet popular sentiment, or popular fear, enabled this outrage to be enacted with impunity. As usual the Irish public displayed their apathy in the face of crime, their savagery and their arrant cowardice: when Corporal Hutson rushed down the street, looking for a doctor to attend to the wounded men, doors were slammed in his face. Notwithstanding the felling of trees to assist the guilty occupants of the three automobiles to escape, which argued a preconcerted plan, the coroner's jury, obviously intimidated, found that the killing of the unfortunate corporal had been committed without premeditation, and, therefore, was not murder. The troops, furious at the verdict of the coroner's court, broke the windows of the jurymen: a poor and inadequate reprisal for their poltroonery! It should be remembered

that the miserable inhabitants of Fermoy simply lived upon the British garrison, but for the English soldiers they might have been reduced to taking in one another's washing, or to starvation: they had neither commerce nor industry, nor the will nor ability to create any.

This is only one out of the many outrages which were perpetrated in Ireland. Almost weekly the news of the basest, most treacherous, and cowardly attacks upon the Irish Constabulary came to hand. Men were shot when their backs were turned; moreover, witnesses of these barbarous assassinations were afraid to come forward and give evidence. In the days of chivalry the knight used to seek a foeman worthy of his steel, but the champions of Sinn Fein were guilty of no such folly: they always selected their enemies when unprepared and unarmed!

During 1920 the civil war proclaimed by Sinn Fein against the English Government was prosecuted with devilish savagery and bitterness. It has been well said that 'if war be destruction, civil war is atrocity.' The Irish Rebellion did not belie this definition. A ruffian, who delighted in human butchery, opened the campaign by murdering R.I. constables who, all unsuspecting and unprepared for an attack, were escorting some carts containing dynamite to be used in a mining operation. Much to the surprise of the inner councils of Sinn Fein, instead of this wanton outrage being met with public disapproval, it was excused on every side by the degenerate Irish, cajoled or intimidated and demoralised by terror. A large sum of money having been offered by the police for the apprehension of the murderer, he became a sort of hero on whose head a reward of English gold was being offered. It is, I believe, a curious fact that to this day this offer of a reward has never been withdrawn. In any case, the assassin contrived to go free. I myself saw him quite recently at Liverpool races, in a crowd, leading the cheers for the King, on His Majesty's arrival at the grand stand with Lord Derby.

Taking advantage of the favourable view accepted of this dastardly crime in Ireland, it was determined by the leaders of the Irish insurrection to prosecute their campaign on these savage lines. From first to last, each and every act of this so-called war was a cold-blooded murder, for never did the Sinn Fein gunmen run the faintest risks, their unfortunate victims being caught off their guard, and when it was impossible for them to defend themselves, or even suspect that they were in danger of being slain. Dressed in civilian garb, the *soi-disant* soldiers of the Irish Republican Army, without uniform or equipment, without badges or marks to distinguish them from the throng of unoffending, unmilitary pedestrians, would suddenly, in the peaceful precincts of a cheerful day, jostle some surprised, unsuspecting victim, secretly proscribed in the dark councils of conspirators, and strike him down from behind: then, their bloody deed accomplished, they would disappear by mingling with the trembling Dublin crowd, too timid to express horror at the crime, too dishonourable to denounce its authors, and too degraded to refuse sanctuary to the elusive miscreants whom they screened and protected from the avenging hand of justice! On one occasion one of these sanguinary ruffians, from a safe point of vantage, wantonly fired into the rows of peaceful spectators at a cricket-match in the grounds of Trinity College, arguing that anyone who could take pleasure in watching so essentially English a game must be *a priori* a sympathiser with the accursed Saxon! As a result of this cold-blooded outrage, an Irish girl was killed.

Many atrocities, too, were committed upon young officers, who met death on their way to, or from, lawn-tennis parties, with never a thought in their hearts but the anticipation of a joyous game, no weapons in their hands but rackets. One most unhappy young lady, who was driving two officers to a garden-party, caught up by the Fates in just such an 'act of war,' was compelled by these warriors of the I.R.A., after seeing her companions slaughtered, to drag their

dead bodies at the tail of her car for miles, trailing them in the dust, to gratify some whim of the cruel, savage, assassins.

A magistrate of the name of Landrun, seized by the bloodthirsty rebels, was tortured with all the refinements of cruelty; the devilish ingenuity of his persecutors surpassing all the ferocious records of revolution. The unhappy victim's legs having been broken, he was first of all buried up to the shoulders in a dung-heap, where he was left for two days. It having been found that he was still alive at the end of this period, he was bound in wire to a heavy cart, and left below the high-water mark, while the tide was ebbing on the sea-shore, eventually to drown when the water flowed back over him. Did scalp-hunting redskins, I wonder, ever plan such sufferings for their victims?

To do strict justice to the Irish Republican Army, it must be admitted that discipline in some respects was maintained in its ranks: drunkenness, for instance, was ruthlessly punished. On the other hand, the propaganda bureau of Sinn Fein, with skilful mendacity, circulated the legend that the Black and Tans were given as much free liquor as they desired, were urged to get drunk, and, when drunk, were provoked to commit atrocities. There was unfortunately a certain amount of intemperance in the messes of the special service officers in Dublin Castle, but none in the barracks of the Auxiliary Cadets of the R.I.C.; moreover, nothing stronger than beer or coffee was allowed to be served in their canteens. The English Army is renowned for its sobriety, and the Black and Tan was no worse, if no better than Tommy Atkins!

While the reports of this savagery were reaching me, I was suffering qualms of conscience for having run guns into the south of Ireland in 1914. I felt that I must purge my soul of this offence, and I could see no way of doing so except by deliberately entering the sphere of danger; so I went again and again to the War Office, and offered to perform Intelligence, or Secret Service, in Ireland. At the very beginning,

I was given a code name at Whitehall, and was warned never to let myself be seen in the lobbies. Whenever I called at the War Office, I noticed some Irishman in clerical attire waiting to make some more or less innocent enquiry.

Throughout the Sinn Fein Revolution, it was most difficult for the English authorities to determine who was a priest and who was a layman disguised in priestly clothing. Unhappily, too, many of the priests – men of little or no holy vocation – were political agitators; and when he steps into the polemical arena the priest is bound to besmirch his cloth with unchristian passions. Once, when an unfortunate R.I. constable had been murdered while kneeling in prayer near the font in a church, the only reproof administered by the vicar conducting the service to the bloody miscreants guilty of this foul deed was this: ‘Do not, in the future, make your filthy mess inside my church; make it outside !’

I have often been tempted to believe that the two greatest curses inflicted upon the Irish are religion and politics. The melancholy truth is that the Churches in Ireland have nothing Christian about them. The Roman Catholic Church in the south and the Presbyterian Church in the north are alike in this: instead of love, they preach hate; they teach their congregations to bear malice towards their political opponents, and to wreak their vengeance upon them whenever occasions arise. Hatred and revenge can only corrupt the Church of Him whose fundamental teachings were love, self-sacrifice, and forgiveness, hence the Churches of Ireland are corrupt. In the bad old days, the rascally priests who dabbled in treason, plotting to murder Elizabeth or in favour of the Stuart Pretender, had at least the support of their pope, but that was most certainly never the case with the Irish agitators: the Fenians of the nineteenth or the Sinn Feiners of the twentieth century posing as ministers of Christ.

An elderly village priest in County Wicklow told my wife

and me, in the summer of 1914, that he was in despair because so many of the young priests in Ireland seemed to be carried away by political fervour. *Priests and People in Ireland*, written by a Catholic, Michael J. F. McCarthy, and published by Hodges Figgis & Co. in 1902, reached many editions; in this book are revealed the sordid, heartless methods by which the Irish priests extort money out of the poorest of the poor: the sale of the bridal cake at weddings, and the collection-plate on the lids of coffins at funerals, for instance. Its outspoken condemnation of the Church made a tremendous sensation in Ireland and its charges were never refuted.

Many seminarists in Ireland are ordained not because they have a vocation for the priesthood, but in order to obtain an easy means of earning a livelihood: a soft job! As pastors they are, alas! far too often, cynical sceptics who feed with the bread of illusion the credibility of their ignorant flocks. And in the sacred career which they have adopted, they freely indulge the most worldly appetites. Officers censoring letters from the front during the Great War frequently found evidence that certain Irish priests were guilty of endeavouring to debauch young girls. I myself have heard girls in Dublin, suspected of leading fast lives, express envy of some friend because she was the mistress of a priest.

On Sunday, the 20th of November, at about nine o'clock in the morning, fourteen English officers were massacred in their beds, or whilst dressing, by Sinn Feiners. Sunday was selected by the assassins so that they might more easily establish alibis, if brought to trial, by rushing away from the sanguinary scene to attend Mass in some neighbouring church. Every single suspect who was brought before a court-martial was able to produce a priest who swore that, while the massacre was in progress, the defendant was receiving the Sacrament at his hands.

I called at the War Office a few days after the Dublin outrages, and was immediately appointed to fill the post of

one of the murdered officers; but, owing to certain delays for which I was not responsible, it was fully a month later that I left for Dublin. At Holyhead, I was met by a staff officer, who conducted me on board the mail-boat and told me to lock myself into the private cabin which had been specially reserved for me and not to put my nose outside until all my fellow-passengers had disembarked on the following morning. He informed me that a Government motor-car from the Castle would be awaiting me on the other side. In short, he treated me with so much deference that I felt quite important! On reaching Kingstown pier, however, I was destined to suffer disillusionment; peeping out of my porthole, I watched the throng of sleepy travellers, in the twilight before dawn, climb the gangways and scurry across the landing-stage to the railway. Seven o'clock struck: excited, and almost afraid, I ventured forth on to the quay. The crowd of passengers had melted away; the last train had steamed off. Even Davy Steven's patience had become exhausted, and he ceased importuning me with his well-worn list of newspapers alive and extinct: popular in the current as well as in a dead and gone generation. He ambled off, croaking and muttering to himself: 'Irish Times, Freeman's Journal, Piccadilly, and the Hawk!'

Eight o'clock struck, and still no motor-car appeared, and I was puzzled to know what I should do. At last I espied some soldiers just outside the dock gates, walking about between huts completely enclosed in an enceinte of barbed wire fully twelve feet in height, and I made signs to them. It took a long time to overcome their suspicions, but finally they summoned an officer, who came out of his quarters and spoke to me through the dock railings. I explained my predicament, and he laughed, remarking: 'This is continually happening. I will telephone to the Castle for a car for you.'

Already my importance seemed to be shrinking!

In about three-quarters of an hour an automobile rolled up to the harbour station. It was punctured all over with

bullet-marks ; its wind-screen was cracked, and the chauffeur appeared to be a really tough customer. Alongside him sat a man in a trench-coat, silent and imperturbable, with a heavy revolver grasped in his hand.

'We've come to fetch you, major,' said the driver.

'Wait a bit !' I observed. 'Let me see your passes. How do I know that you're not a couple of "Shinners" come to kidnap me ?'

The chauffeur laughed, and, turning to the sentry on the gate, appealed to him : 'Tell this officer who I am !'

'He's an R.A.S.C. driver,' declared the sentry.

'Nevertheless, let me see your passes !' I insisted.

The passes being produced, and proving satisfactory, I clambered into the back of the car.

'You'd better have your "fountain-pen" handy,' advised the chauffeur, as he put in the clutch.

' "Fountain-pen ?" ' I queried. 'What the devil's that ?'

'This thing,' continued the chauffeur, leaning over and touching his silent escort's revolver. 'We always call them "fountain-pens" here !'

We ran up to Dublin at a nerve-racking speed without ever once blowing our horn. Through Blackrock, along Northumberland Road and across Merrion Square we dashed : the streets were strangely silent and deserted, the shadow of fear hanging over the red-brick villas ; and even the Royal Irish constables standing at corners or patrolling the avenues, their rifles carried at 'the ready,' had an appearance of intense anxiety ; a cat, slinking across the road, and a dog, his tail between his legs, following the wall, close under its shadow, gave the impression that every living thing was under the spell of terror !

'Don't you ever blow your horn ?' I asked.

'Not much !' replied my Jehu. 'If we were to give warning of our approach, we might be shot-up ; the swine are always hiding in some of these houses. That's how I came to get shot-up the other day, coming from Terenure with

Colonel and Mrs. Fitzjohn. There was a horse-cart in the way, and I hooted to get a clear road; we had a narrow squeak, I can tell you! Fortunately it was raining, so we had our hood up: that put 'em off their aim. When Mrs. Fitzjohn jumped out of the car in Lower Castle Yard, she shook two bullets out of her fur coat and laughed. She's a good-plucked 'un, I can tell yer! The colonel and I were far more scared than she!

'There's a bad spot just here,' he resumed, after three minutes' silence, 'where Lower Mount Street runs into Merrion Square.' And as he spoke the car jolted violently on the tramlines, leaving me in doubt as to whether the chauffeur were referring to the road surface or a possible ambush.

Although it was well past half past nine o'clock when we drew into Lower Castle Yard, no one was astir. In Dublin, no one is ever astir before ten o'clock, and the vast army of R.I. constables, D.M. Police, ex-officers, servants, and lady clerks which had been assembled in the Castle to put down the Sinn Fein Rebellion did not take long to capture the careless rapture of Irish slothfulness, and used to remain abed until the sun had warmed the day.

The most astonishing feature of the garrison was the large staff of girl clerks employed in Dublin Castle in 1921. They all used to work in a hall of considerable size, known to ribald young officers as the 'bird-cage.' It defied the wit of man to explain their usefulness, because whoever had engaged them had not troubled to select trained stenographers; so that, in the intervals of philandering and dancing in the throne-room, or Saint Patrick's Hall, they were busily employed sorting index-cards. When our secretary was asked who had engaged them, he used to 'put his thumb unto his nose and spread his fingers out.'

While on that December morning I was contemplating the castle keep, Saint Patrick's Chapel, and wondering when my chief and colleagues would have sufficiently recovered from

their breakfasts to justify me in presenting myself to them, the swarm of lady clerks burst for the first time upon my astonished gaze; buzzing, chattering, and barely stopping to repair their faded complexions by artificial means, they hurried past me through the archway on their way to earn their daily bread.

Just as the Vatican has given its name to the pope's government, and the Sublime Porte its name to the sultan's, so Dublin Castle has come to signify England's rule of Ireland: always a vile, corrupt government – too brutal in the seventeenth century, it had become too flaccid, too weak and too sentimental in the twentieth. Ever since the summer of 1919 I had held the opinion that Sinn Fein was going to win, and overthrow Dublin Castle, arguing that, after the Great War in which they had supped too full of horrors, neither the British public nor Parliament would sanction the severe military measures necessary to suppress the rebellion. Few statesmen in English history could have put down the Sinn Fein Rebellion in 1921; the task required a stern man of high moral character, holding the universal respect and confidence of England. Pitt or Wilberforce might have succeeded, or perhaps Gladstone in middle age, but the Ministers governing in 1921 had neither that respect nor confidence, they were opportunists. When, for instance, vowing they would ne'er consent to release hunger-striking criminals, they consented, the British public merely shrugged their shoulders and laughed.

On being asked by General Johnnie Du Cane in London if I would undertake special service in Ireland, I had fully expected to be given a responsible post; but, on arrival, I found myself in a subordinate position. This was a grave disappointment to me, as, owing to my exceptional knowledge of the Irish rebels, I felt competent to handle the situation better than an ordinary regimental officer; besides, after having represented the British Artillery at G.Q.G., I felt the

ignominy of being reduced to the rank of an auxiliary cadet of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Nevertheless, not wishing to appear peevish and discontent, I carried out the trivial tasks assigned to me with all the patience I could command, and watched the situation with critical eyes. I advised the head of the Intelligence Department at Dublin Castle to warn Scotland Yard to keep watch on Samuel Geddes, the secretary and proprietor of the Irish Club in London; but, three weeks later, I was sent for by the chief, who told me chaffingly that I had discovered a mare's-nest: that the club was quite a harmless institution. Almost on the very day when my advice was scorned, de Valera succeeded in escaping from Lincoln Gaol. On the death of Samuel Geddes, a few years later, he left a detailed account of how the conspiracy for rescuing the elusive rebel from prison had been hatched by him at the Irish Club in Charing Cross Road.

As far as I know, every constable of the R.I.C. either remained loyal to his oath or honourably resigned from the force if he felt out of sympathy with the blunders and brutality of the English officials. But, on the other hand, the Dublin Metropolitan Police quite openly sided with the rebels: certain members who to-day are acclaimed in Ireland as heroes of Sinn Fein, for having given valuable information and assistance to Michael Collins during 1920 and 1921, were detectives of G Division of the D.M.P. receiving English pay, serving in Dublin Castle under an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. That these rascally traitors were never caught is proof of the incompetence of the English Intelligence service in Dublin; for they were continually in our midst, gravely suspected by us of betraying us to the murder-gang while carrying out their constabulary duties. After a month in the Castle I grew quite contemptuous of the senior officers in control of the situation. I am convinced that the head inspectors of the Royal Irish

Constabulary could have carried out the Intelligence work far more efficiently and economically than the military adventurers who were put over their heads. Exception must be made, however, of a certain clever, fearless Artillery colonel, whom we all knew as 'O'; he, indeed, was always a match for the most artful of the imps of the I.R.B., and might have scotched the rebellion if he had been given a free hand.

The little army of girl clerks at the Castle expended oceans of ink and acres of paper in preparing dossiers for every citizen in the Dublin area: one of their 'triumphs' was their description of Sir Horace Plunkett as a 'dangerous republican.' Despite his index-card filed amongst the black-lists of the 'bird-cage,' Sir Horace nevertheless still remained a Privy Councillor of His Majesty and a member of the Athenæum Club. The position was intolerable for Sir Nevil Macready, because the English Cabinet, having appointed him commander-in-chief in Ireland, refused to take his advice and declare martial law throughout the whole country. We, who had offered our services in the civil war, were incorporated in a special division of the R.I.C., being described as auxiliary cadets; we were often confused with the Black and Tans – ex-soldiers recruited for the R.I.C., and so nicknamed, by a wag, because they wore the black belts and equipment of the constabulary over their military khaki – but, as the Press tarred us with the same brush, this did not much matter. We were all ex-officers of Kitchener's Army, and most of us had been decorated for gallantry in the firing line: a platoon on duty in Dublin Castle consisted of youths all of whom had bars to their Military Crosses.

The Sinn Fein rebels were past masters of every cunning device, and invariably succeeded in outwitting their duller-minded, artless Anglo-Saxon adversaries: they would disguise themselves and pose as Black and Tans when carrying out some of their more savage raids, even going so far as to compel their victims to sing 'God Save the King' before being tortured to death; thus they contrived to cast

the stigma of not a few of their foulest crimes upon the unhappy auxiliaries of the Royal Irish Constabulary; so that to this day even the loyalist population credits the Black and Tans with certain outrages which were actually committed by Sinn Feiners. Notorious instances of this grim play-acting were the assassinations, on the 7th of March, 1921, of ex-Lord Mayor O'Callaghan and Lord Mayor Clancy of Limerick, who were 'executed' by orders of the I.R.B. on account of their humane and moderate views: O'Callaghan having been described by an English journalist as 'a just and sensible man, far from a revolutionary.'

On the other hand, Lord Mayor McCurtain of Cork was killed, as a reprisal, by regular R.I. Constables, who hoped that their horrid deed might put a term to their systematic persecution at the hands of Sinn Fein. The results of this bloody crime were most disappointing to the R.I.C., and the experiment was never repeated. McCurtain's murder was, I am convinced, the only atrocity committed by the Irish constables of the force.

While on the subject of the deaths of mayors, I may as well reveal the secret that Lord Mayor MacSwiney was kept alive, while hunger-striking for two months, by glucose surreptitiously added to his drinking water; he was intimidated by the extremists into making a martyr of himself; had he faltered in his desperate purpose, the inexorable mills of the Irish Republican Brotherhood would have ground him exceeding small. Nevertheless, it required the stubborn, determined character of an Irishman, and all the faith of an Irish soul to go to death in such a terrible fashion.

Very shortly after I had settled down in the Castle, the Black and Tans, having obtained information of an ambush which had been planned at Tolka Bridge, Drumcondra, slipped out of barracks, and, taking a wide sweep, came on the rebels in rear, and captured the lot after a running fight in which one of the gunmen was mortally wounded. This

was a very smart piece of work, and I was present when the patrol was congratulated by an official. Standing on some steps in Lower Castle Yard, he harangued the Black and Tans thus: 'I congratulate you all heartily on your success; you have all behaved splendidly. These seven rascals whom you have caught red-handed are murderers whom you would have been justified in shooting on sight. Rely on me always to support you !'

For some obscure reason, which I have never seen explained, we had a very bad Press; to read the *Daily Mail* or *Daily News* one might have supposed that we, who were risking our lives to keep the Union Jack flying in Ireland, were the foe, and that the treacherous, bloodthirsty cut-throats of Sinn Fein were noble heroes, suffering persecution at our hands.

On the other hand, the rebels were always well served by their propaganda bureau under the able management of Erskine Childers, an Englishman, albeit vainer than the vainest of Irish Celts, who constantly urged ferocious acts of hostility to the Union Jack. It was a grim satisfaction to most of us when, a few months after England's surrender to Sinn Fein, this unspeakable traitor met with poetic justice on the scaffold at the hands of his *ci-devant* comrades in arms.

Thus it came about that the cruel, barbarous atrocities committed weekly by the Irish murder-gang frequently went unreported in our newspapers, whereas every preposterous lie started in the Sinn Fein pamphlets about the Black and Tans obtained currency. For example: a young officer of the 9th Lancers, captured when wounded in an ambush, was propped up against a bank, and, while dying, used by the Sinn Feiners as a target for a revolver competition; again, an elderly lady, Mrs. Lindsay of Coachford, for having warned the officer commanding at Cork of an impending ambushade, was borne off from her home as a prisoner; her face was smeared with mud, she was not allowed to wash;

she was dressed in rags, and, before being murdered, was led about the country for weeks by the rebels, who used to make fun of her, show her to the peasants, and pretend, amidst roars of laughter, that she was a crazy witch.

Now these two incidents were kept out of the English newspapers. On the other hand, a tale obtained currency through the Sinn Fein propaganda bureau that a Black and Tan had inflicted the Chinese torture of the glove upon a rebel caught by him. It is, of course, obvious that a specially skilled torturer, many assistants, and a fully equipped torture-chamber would be required to carry out this hideous Celestial punishment, and that one, two, or even three cadets would not have been physically capable of holding a man down and flaying his hand; nevertheless, this preposterous story was actually believed by egregious sentimentalists.

It is, indeed, a notorious fact that no Black and Tan could ever be induced to shoot a rebel in cold blood; certain witnesses present have assured me that none of the auxiliary cadets, who caught rebels red-handed, torturing their victims to death, could be induced to act the part of summary executioner of even these inhuman miscreants.

One of the Black and Tans related to me how he had led a whimpering Sinn Feiner into a field, and had pointed his revolver at the wretched creature's head with the intention of blowing his brains out, but that when it came to the point he could not bring himself to pull the trigger. 'You can't butcher a chap in cold blood when he's blubbering!' he remarked.

As far as I know, petty charges of pilfering were the most that were ever proved against the Black and Tans. I knew personally several of the men who burned down a portion of the City of Cork and committed other similar acts of incendiarism; they were quite sincere in their conviction that they were acting under official orders; moreover, they were fully justified in their belief that reprisals were authorised, the truth about reprisals being as follows: as many county

inspectors of the R.I.C. as could be gathered together were assembled in Dublin Castle in 1919, directly the military took over control from the constabulary, and they were urged and exhorted to make their men carry out reprisals; they were warned, however, that the Chief Secretary might not be able always to give countenance to these acts openly in Parliament, so that they must not be surprised if from time to time Dublin Castle were to make a pretence of disavowing the conduct of the police and were to issue factitious orders to the effect that reprisals must cease; the inspectors were there and then instructed that they need not take any notice of these factitious orders, but were, notwithstanding, to continue carrying on their reprisals.

Thus it came about that when an outcry arose in England in 1921, engineered with floods of flabby sentimentalism by the Liberal Press, Dublin Castle could not make the county inspectors believe that the authorities genuinely desired reprisals to come to an end. Reprisals are a recognised instrument of national policy, but they should be undertaken by the responsible authority with all the publicity in the world; they should be carried out relentlessly with machine-like precision: executions following outrages as night follows day.

If, whenever a soldier or constable had been assassinated in Ireland, a prominent Sinn Feiner had been publicly hanged on the following morning hard by the spot where the murder had been committed, the rebellion might have collapsed in a month, just as all rebellions collapse in the face of strong, resolute Governments.

Although openly expressing his detestation of the Sinn Fein Rebellion, his disgust at the dastardly methods to which the gunmen resorted, and his contempt for the treachery, savagery, and poltroonery of the Irish Republican Army, the Prime Minister, in his innermost heart, loathed the idea of using military force against the Irish, and at an early date he began to regret having embarked on the campaign of

suppressing Sinn Fein. Yearning for peace, he was willing to grant Ireland self-government on almost any terms, and, despite his violent speeches and bombastic proclamations denouncing the Irish leaders as sanguinary assassins, he never ceased in his endeavours to find some responsible person with whom he might negotiate; but the difficulty was to find the man who had sufficient authority to treat with him on behalf of Sinn Fein. By way of leaving no stone unturned in his efforts to get in touch with anyone who, in picturesque, Lloyd Georgian language, 'could deliver the goods,' the Prime Minister had appointed Mr. Cope to be an assistant under-secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, and entrusted him with a confidential mission: he was instructed to feel his way with the Sinn Fein leaders and try to come to terms with them; this involved secret meetings with a solicitor who was law adviser to the murder-gang. It is difficult to understand how anyone could have been induced to undertake such an unpleasant task. Cope must have had tremendous courage, patience, and a strong stomach to boot, to hold interviews with the savage, unsavoury human butchers, gloating over their murders of constables and soldiers.

Cope served the Prime Minister loyally and faithfully with amazing tact and skill; but his confidential mission involved him in the necessity of having to make humiliating and untimely concessions to Sinn Fein, and these, we, who were serving in the Castle, bitterly resented. De Valera, for instance, was immediately released when the Black and Tans had risked their lives to catch this elusive rebel; in this connection, it is worth while remembering that, but for the excessive and misplaced humanity of a young officer, de Valera would have been shot in attempting to escape. Cope was universally detested by everyone in the Castle, it being generally supposed that he was going to sell us all to the rebels: most of us, I fancy, regarded him as a sort of Jonathan Wild.

The saddest thing about Irish history is that English Ministers, while flatly refusing to listen to the reasoned arguments of honourable Irish statesmen like Grattan, Flood, and Redmond, have always surrendered to the threats of moonlighters and Fenians ! What a different tale might be told, how much bloodshed might have been averted, had Lord Salisbury in 1885 given Home Rule to Ireland ! Ireland won land reform because Gladstone was afraid of Parnell, and self-government because Lloyd George went in terror of Michael Collins's pistol, not perhaps for himself – indeed, he has proved his personal courage often enough – but for those dear to him.

Having been the Inspector of Irish Volunteers for County Wicklow, under Colonel Moore in 1914, I was regarded as a doubly dyed traitor by Sinn Fein and sentenced to death ; my name being entered in a special list, together with the names of four other officers, to be shot on sight whenever and wherever found. This list was supposed to be written in blood : I shrewdly suspect it was red ink !

I did not often leave the Castle, but whenever I did so I was followed by a youth, who, starting on my trail at the Castle exit in Dame Street, used to hold me in pursuit like a sleuth. It was a horrible feeling to be so hunted ; sometimes I contrived to shake off my pursuer, but at others he stuck to me like a leech. I knew that my follower had no weapon on him, but I also knew that, if he could manœuvre me towards some gunman, he only had to make a signal and I should be a dead man ! Whenever I took my walks abroad I always held a cocked revolver in my hand, thrust inside my side-pocket, and in the gardens of the Castle I used to practise shooting from my hip and flicking my hat into the face of anyone who might suddenly engage me in conversation. Often, I have felt a terrible sensation, when walking in the crowded streets of Dublin, that I must put my back against the wall and await the arrival of some friend to give me moral support.

One day, while crossing Lower Castle Yard on my way to lunch with a lady at Jammet's Restaurant, I found myself walking alongside two fine young fellows, over six feet in height, who used to be employed as orderlies – in plain clothes – in the corridor outside my office. We all three passed the sentry and gate-keeper, and emerged into Dame Street together; I turning sharply to the right, while the other two crossed the road, making for Parliament Street. I had reached the windows of Callagher's, the saddler's shop, not ten paces distant, when I heard four or five pistol-shots ring out, and the crowd ran past me, yelling and screaming; putting my back against the wall, I whipped out my revolver; when the throng of terrified pedestrians had swept on, I saw, to my horror, the dead bodies of the two unfortunate orderlies, with their brains blown out, lying in Parliament Street.

While this foul murder was being committed, two men were being tried by court-martial for their lives, on the capital charge, in the City Hall; and it is a curious fact that the R.I. constable escorting the prisoners, happening to turn round to peep out of the window of the court-room which looked down Parliament Street, actually witnessed the assassination of the two orderlies. The murderers made off in a car, which had been standing, with its engine running, outside the Dolphin Hotel in Essex Street, and were never caught.

Even amidst the stark horror of murders, reprisals, ambushades, and raids the unconscious humour of the Irish would occasionally provoke a laugh. Once on Wexford Bridge, some Black and Tans, having caught a Sinn Feiner who was lying in wait to fire on them, offered him the choice of being shot or drowned.

'Oh, for God's sake, don't drown me !' cried the rebel. 'I can't swim !'

A lady, having been driven by the threats of Sinn Fein from her home in Ireland, accompanied by her maid, was

seeking lodgings at Montreux, as with her straitened means she found hotel life too costly. After inspecting certain apartments in the Rue Nestlé, she confided in Ancilla that although she liked the rooms she feared she might dislike being served by the landlady, who had a goitre.

'Ah, ma'am,' quoth the Irish maid, 'maybe she moightn't be playin' upon it arl the toime !'

I would never have believed it possible for English troops to become so slack and ill-disciplined as those which I observed while I was carrying out Intelligence duties in Ireland in 1921. The only excuses to be made for them were the reaction from which both officers and men suffered after the tension of four years of fighting in the Great War, and the large proportion of very young recruits in the regiments. Undoubtedly, too, Sinn Féin had contrived to introduce agents of sedition into the ranks of the Infantry quartered in Ireland. On two occasions, at least, sentries allowed their rifles to be plucked from their hands, and armed guards suffered without a struggle their weapons and cartridges to be taken from their guard-rooms by rebels ; indeed, the rebels used to boast that every service-rifle and every machine-gun which they possessed had been sold or surrendered to them by the English soldiers.

Several times, too, Army transport drivers, fully armed, permitted the very horses they were driving to be shot dead by the gunmen, openly and in the full light of day ; again and again, prisoners – murderers who had been caught red-handed, or actually convicted – were allowed to escape by their military guards, and the one miscreant who had admitted his guilt of having participated in the massacre of officers on the 20th of November, 1920, and who was under sentence of death, was actually helped to break out of Kilmainham Gaol by a soldier, but no senior officer was punished, although a senior officer must have been responsible for the safeguarding of such an important prisoner ;

indeed the headquarters staff of the Dublin garrison seemed far more pre-occupied in frequenting race-meetings than in attending to their duties.

I myself was a witness of an incident in which a sentry, while guarding captured rebels at exercise, turned his back on his prisoners, and, laying his rifle on the ground, played with a dog. I watched another – with the eye of his N.C.O. upon him too – lend his rifle to a comrade to fish a football from off a roof where it had lodged, entangled in barbed wire. When I reported these lapses of discipline, it became manifest that I caused annoyance to those responsible. I was even told that I was a nuisance !

The division of auxiliary cadets of the R.I.C. has been shamefully and unjustly maligned by skilful, mendacious propaganda on behalf of Sinn Fein ; by partisan and perhaps corrupt Press reporters, and even by members of the corps itself. Hastily raised in an emergency from amongst the bravest officers of Kitchener's Army, to meet the peril of sudden, bloody mutiny, the auxiliary cadets had an ephemeral career, and have now dispersed and vanished corporeally and individually – no one might care to boast that he had ever been a member of this force, which, never having possessed a tradition, colours, crest, or even a special uniform, has to-day neither a body to be kicked nor a soul to be damned !

In May 1921 I was transferred to Athlone to take charge of the Intelligence bureau there ; for a colleague, I was given a former employee of Pinkerton's of the U.S.A., an ex-detective.

We soon discovered, however, that American methods of crime detection were not suited to the conditions then prevailing, under which the rebels were successfully carrying out their campaign of murder and terrorism. Dublin Castle eventually abandoned the attempt to cope with it in this way.

The brigade commander, Colonel Lambert, to whom I had been appointed Intelligence officer, had commanded a division with distinction in France; he was himself so honourable and of so gentle a disposition that he simply could not realise that such treacherous, inhuman savages as the Sinn Fein rebels existed in the world. In June 1921 I warned him that a flying squad of the murder-gang on bicycles was in the neighbourhood, thirsting for a scalp or two, and I implored him to be extra cautious. To my consternation, he refused to believe that his life was in danger: 'Why should the Irish wish to murder me?' he asked. 'My wife and I are most popular here; we like the Irish, and take no part in their polemics.'

I remonstrated with him, but he persisted in his fatuous state of mind, and, as a result of incaution, two days later he was assassinated by gun-men who, lined up behind a wall bordering the road, awaited his return from a lawn-tennis party. The murderers opened fire with shot-guns on the wives of Colonels Lambert and Challoner, seated in the front of the motor-car which Mrs. Lambert was driving, wounding Mrs. Challoner grievously. They hoped, no doubt, to stop the car, and so be able to massacre the whole party; but Mrs. Lambert, with fine courage, despite the howls and menaces of the murder-gang and a fusillade, drove on at full speed, bearing her wounded friend and dying husband out of range of the miscreants. Mrs. Challoner had thirty-two pellets in her head, and Colonel Lambert received a shot in the throat at so close a range that the wad of the charge was discovered in the woollen comforter he was wearing round his neck. The murder was committed with number four shot, fired from a twelve-bore pin-fire cartridge, so this gave us a clue. Aided by two very clever detectives, I succeeded in identifying one of the assassins, and we were preparing to capture him when, to my intense disappointment and exasperation, the English Government surrendered to Sinn Fein and proclaimed an

armistice. I had so laid my plans – and I had managed to secure possession of three Mills bombs – that I do not think the wretch could have escaped us. I was all agog to make it hot for him !

At Athlone, during the spring of 1921, I was fortunate enough to obtain a photograph of Michael Collins, and I was still issuing copies of this portrait to the different bureaux of the Intelligence department throughout Ireland during the armistice. Michael Collins, who by that time was negotiating with the English politicians, complained that the circulating of his portrait was a breach of the armistice, and so I was ordered to discontinue this work ; moreover, I was warned that special efforts would be made by the gunmen to catch me.

On a certain occasion, a county inspector, in my presence, took the dying deposition of an R.I. constable who had been shot by the Sinn Feiners ; the poor fellow testified thus : ‘I had known these men for about a week and we had become quite friendly ; I often used to go with them into the public-house to have a small Guinness ; sometimes they would pay, sometimes I would pay. Yesterday, as I was stepping out of the parlour with them, they suddenly fired their pistols into my back ; I don’t know why !’

It seems to me that nothing more treacherous, nothing more inhuman, nothing more barbarous has ever been done. A dog, even, will not attack a cat which has been accustomed to lap out of the same saucer with him.

The Irish were always a quarrelsome, bloodthirsty people, and in the eighteenth century would engage in duels on the very faintest provocation. When I was a child, my grandfather told me the following story : two Irishmen, dining together, were discussing dainty dishes, and, referring to anchovy sauce, one of them remarked : ‘Many’s the time I’ve seen them things growing in my uncle’s garden in Italy.’

‘What, anchovies ?’ queried the other.

'Yes, anchovies !' asserted the first speaker.

'Nonsense !' was the retort. 'You're a liar !'

There and then a quarrel arose, as the outcome of which a duel was fought, and, as a result, the duellist who had denied the vegetable nature of anchovies was killed.

Some lad who had been watching the fight, while contemplating the corpse, remarked : 'Alas ! that poor fellow will cut no more capers !'

'What's that you say – capers !' exclaimed the surviving duellist in horror and consternation. 'Sure, 'tis capers, not anchovies, I meant all the time !'

My old friend, Miles Clayton, the senior inspector of the R.I.C., a man universally loved and respected, used frequently to say to me : 'You'll see, the Government will let us all down one day !' His prophecy proved true !

When the end was in sight, by way of conciliating the rebels, Lloyd George appointed a Roman Catholic to be Lord Lieutenant, and another co-religionist to be at the head of the Royal Irish Constabulary : he might as well have appointed a Roman Catholic hangman ! It is a lamentable fact that none of the high officials in Ireland had sufficient public spirit or high principles to resign his appointment when the day came to surrender to the cowardly, treacherous cut-throats of Sinn Fein and haul down the Union Jack !

One rainy night in December it being the very last day I was to spend in Ireland, a weather-beaten jarvey had driven me on his outside car for many miles through the sleet and icy north wind to my quarters. On arrival, he begged a drink of whiskey to keep off a chill. Going indoors, I secured a bottle and a tumbler, which I carried to the front door, and having poured him out a very liberal potion of the precious liquor, with an eye on his purple complexion and plum-coloured nose, I felt it to be my duty to remonstrate with him. 'It's too much of this you're taking, Pat,' I observed. 'Remember ! every glass of spirit you drink is a nail in your coffin !'

‘Ah ! now, your honour,’ quoth the jarvey, holding out his empty tumbler, ‘yez have the hammer in your hand ; drive in another nail !’

On leaving Ireland for the last time, I was driving along the North Wall with my uniform-case balanced on an outside car.

‘What’ll you do, Pat,’ I remarked to the jarvey, ‘when all the soldiers are gone ?’

‘What’ll I do, sorr ? God knows ! The curse of Cromwell on them that have driven you away, your honour, and all our soldiers too !’

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